

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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The pilot

1. How do I apply for the pilot?

Applications can be made online or by submitting a hard copy application form, available at Council office (1 Merrijig Drive, Torquay) or by calling us on **5261 0600**.

We recommend that you're aware of the application process and its requirements and gain approval before you purchase a tiny house on wheels, as there are numerous elements to consider.

You can view the process online via surfcoast.vic.gov.au/THOWs or chat to our Planning team by calling **5261 0600**.

2. What's the step-by-step process?

1. Apply for the pilot by completing the online application form or a hard copy application form, available from Council office (1 Merrijig Drive, Torquay) or by calling 5261 0600.
2. Applications are assessed for suitability, additional information may be requested.
3. If successful, an invitation to be part of the pilot will be provided with details of next steps.
4. Further approvals may need to be secured before a permit is issued (i.e. onsite wastewater management system).
5. On submission of these approvals, a Local Law will be issued, subject to terms and conditions. The permit will be valid until 13 December 2026 and allow temporary residence.
6. At least 14 days before any action is taken to place the tiny house on wheels on the land, Council must be notified.
7. Council will notify neighbours and provide information on the pilot and how feedback will be obtained.

3. When does the pilot start and finish?

Applications opened 13 December 2023.

Any permits issued will be valid until 13 December 2026.

4. How long will the application process take?

- Applications will be acknowledged **within three days**.
- Outcome of assessment will be provided within **28 days** of receipt (including a request for information or advice on suitability for pilot).
- Local Law permit will be issued within **14 days** of receipt of any further approvals/information required.
- **14 days prior** to commencing any site preparations or works associated with installing the tiny house on the land, Council must be notified to enable notice to neighbours.

5. How much will the application and/or permit cost?

The application fee for the permit under the Community Amenity Local Law for pilot participants will not be charged.

There may be other fees and charges associated with your application, e.g: onsite wastewater management system (approx. \$777), additional waste service (various costs ranging from \$72 to \$234, dependent on type and size of bins), and planning permit fees, for example vegetation removal (approx. \$1230).

6. What happens after the pilot period has ended?

We will monitor and evaluate all applications, to help develop processes and policies to potentially regulate THOWs in the future.

A report with a recommendation on whether THOWs can be a safe and legal way to increase housing options across the shire will be prepared for Council, to be considered at a Council meeting prior to the pilot period ending.

7. Why should I invest in a tiny house on wheels if there is no guarantee they will be allowed in the Surf Coast after the pilot?

We acknowledge a tiny house on wheels is a significant investment for a pilot that is not guaranteed beyond December 2026, however we are committed to finding local solutions to the national affordable accommodation crisis. We will work with tiny house on wheels owners towards the end of the pilot, on the way forward and potential next steps.

8. Why has Surf Coast Shire Council introduced the pilot?

The pilot will help us to better understand complex issues surrounding use of tiny houses on wheels before reaching a formal local law position. It will enable us to test the conditions under which THOWs are allowed and regulated, in a manner that services the community.

In May 2021 Council declared a key worker accommodation crisis in recognition of how a lack of affordable accommodation was impacting the economy and sustainability of local communities.

As part of our Council Plan, we want people to have access to more affordable and sustainable residential accommodation options. Tiny houses on wheels ticks both of these boxes.

9. I'm aware that the Victorian Government Housing Statement reforms are making it easier for people to build a small second home on the same property through changes to the planning and building systems. How will the Housing Statement impact this pilot?

On 14 December, the Minister for Planning approved Amendment VC253 to the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPP) and all planning schemes in Victoria. The Amendment changes the VPP by introducing a new land use term and siting, design and amenity requirements for a small second dwelling to implement [Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024 – 2034](#).

We're currently working through Amendment VC253 Explanatory Report, Instruction Sheet and the changes the amendment has introduced into the clauses and schedules of the Surf Coast Shire Planning Scheme and all planning schemes in Victoria.

The tiny house on wheels

1. What is a tiny house on wheels?

A tiny house on wheels has a variety of definitions. For the purposes of this pilot, a tiny house on wheels is defined as a provisional form of accommodation designed to be used as a dwelling and registered or required to be registered under the *Road Safety Act 1986 (Vic)*, and excludes recreational registrable vehicles such as a caravans, wagons or vans.

2. Does a caravan, wagon or van class as a tiny house on wheels?

A caravan, wagon or van is classified as a recreational registrable vehicle and for the purposes of this pilot, is not a tiny house on wheels.

3. Can the tiny house be removed from the trailer base?

No, the tiny house needs to remain on its trailer base. This is to avoid planning scheme triggers that would class the tiny house without wheels as “building and works”, subsequently requiring a planning permit.

4. What size can my tiny house on wheels be?

There are no limits placed on the size of a tiny house on wheels, however consideration should be given to its ability to be transported and the requirement for it to be registered under the Road Safety Act.

Other considerations will be the ability for the tiny house on wheels to be appropriately located on site to reduce impacts on existing residences, avoid removal of vegetation, provide for its utilities and services connections, and maintain sufficient setbacks.

5. How do I manage wastewater and what kind of toilet is acceptable inside the tiny house on wheels?

There are no specific requirements, however the toilet (and any other fixtures producing greywater) will need to be serviced by an onsite wastewater management (septic tank) system or otherwise connected to reticulated sewer.

Approval will need to be firstly obtained from the regulatory authority prior to connection/installation and occupancy.

Council issues onsite wastewater management system permits (which is a separate process) and Barwon Water is responsible for overseeing any connections to reticulated sewer.

In addition, if you would like to connect to mains water, approval must be firstly obtained from Barwon Water.

6. What kind of building materials do I need to use?

Tiny houses on wheels must not be made of canvas or other similar material, and must be built to the relevant Bushfire Attack Level requirements where in a bushfire prone area.

7. Are there building standards I need to meet?

Tiny houses on wheels do not require a building permit, however for the purposes of the pilot there are minimum standards which must be met including being built to

the relevant Bushfire Attack Level requirements where in a bushfire prone area, and inclusion of smoke alarms and other relevant certifications.

8. How many people can live in my tiny house on wheels?

For the purposes of the pilot, there are no prescribed limits on how many people can live in a tiny house on wheels. This will be determined by the capacity of the THOWs.

9. Can I use my tiny house on wheels as a short-stay accommodation venue (e.g as an AirBnB listing)?

The pilot focuses entirely on possibilities for affordable housing and key worker accommodation, and does not permit THOWs for short-term leisure-style accommodation.

10. Who checks the plumbing and electrical fit-out?

A licensed plumber and electrician provide compliance certificates on completion of works undertaken.

The requirements

1. Does Council provide a permit/need to approve my tiny house on wheels?

Yes. Council officers will assess all applications for tiny houses on wheels on a case-by-case basis. Applications that have been approved to place and use a tiny house will be issued with a permit under the Community Amenity Local Law. The permit is subject to conditions.

2. What do I need to submit in my application?

To apply, you will need to have a site/location for your application. In addition, information will be required in relation to the intended siting of the tiny house on Wheels. Requirements include:

- Permission from land owner to park on suitable land
- Compliance certificates for tiny house and site connections (electrical, plumbing and energy rating if applicable)
- Essential safety measures (smoke alarm and residual current device)
- Electricity/gas connection, potable water source, wastewater management, and stormwater management
- Certificate of Title
- Proposed / indicative site plan

3. How do I find out what zones are approved for a permit?

The pilot is considering applications in zones which allow for accommodation, including residential and some rural zones. You can look at the zoning of your property through [VicPlan](#).

In some circumstances, a tiny house on wheels may require a planning permit under the Surf Coast Planning Scheme. This is dependent largely on the type of accommodation (how the Tiny House is occupied). If a planning permit is required, the applicant will be directed to our [planning permit application process](#).

4. Can I park in a bushfire zone?

We will not be accepting applications to park a tiny house on wheels in bushfire prone areas, unless these sit within the existing townships.

5. Can I park in a flood zone?

We will not consider applications to park a tiny house on wheels in areas affected by flooding overlays.

6. Do I need to pay rates for my tiny house on wheels?

There are no changes to rates for properties where a tiny house on wheels is parked.

7. Can I have pets in my tiny house on wheels?

Pets are allowed at the tiny house on wheels and must follow our existing rules, which outline [how many animals you are permitted in rural and residential areas](#).

The location

1. Where can I park my tiny house on wheels?

The pilot is considering applications in zones which allow for accommodation, including residential and some rural zones. You can look at the zoning of your property through [VicPlan](#).

2. Do I need an agreement with a property owner?

We'll require confirmation from the landowner that you are able to park your tiny house on wheels on their property.

3. Does the property where I plan to park my tiny house on wheels need to have a house on it? Or can I park on vacant land?

It is anticipated that the main arrangement for the pilot will be a host property, with a tiny house at the rear of a site.

Typically vacant blocks aren't connected to the appropriate services, which may be a barrier however we are open to considering all applications on their merits.

4. I own a property. How many tiny houses on wheels can I park on it?

We acknowledge that some properties will have the potential to have multiple tiny houses on wheels parked on them. Council officers will assess each application on a case-by-case basis, to determine if the respective applications meet requirements.

We will consider if more than one tiny house is feasible, based on elements such as the number of tenants, the size of the site, and the ability to accommodate services needed to support the tiny houses.

5. Could this pilot mean we could see a Tiny House village set-up somewhere in the Surf Coast Shire?

Tiny House villages would not meet the criteria for the pilot.

A village would be characterized as a caravan park, and would be considered under caravan park regulations.

6. I don't have a location to place my THOWs. Can I still apply and Council can find or recommend a site on my behalf?

Inclusion in the pilot is dependent on having a specific site. Due to limited resources, we're unable to provide recommendations on properties available for THOWs placement.

7. Can Council recommend a business which provides THOWs?

We're unable to recommend preferred providers of THOWs. The [Australian Tiny Houses Association](#) promotes tiny house expos which might be useful for potential applicants.

8. My property is ideal for a THOWs. Can Council link me up with a potential applicant who needs somewhere to park their THOWs?

Offers of land are outside of the pilot guidelines. Applicants are required to seek permission themselves from a land owner to park on suitable land.

9. Can I park my tiny house on wheels on public land?

The pilot is only considering applications relating to private land. Tiny houses cannot be parked and used on public land.

10. Can I move my tiny house on wheels to different locations?

Yes, however a new location would require a new permit to be issued.

11. Do I need to tell the neighbours?

As part of the pilot, we will be communicating with neighbouring properties to gain feedback on their experience.

Consultation will start prior to the parking of the tiny house on wheels on the land, and therefore it is important to notify Council at least 14 days prior to commencing any activities associated with parking the THOWs.

We will continue consultation with neighbours throughout the pilot.

12. How is this pilot considering amenity impacts?

The pilot aims to protect the character of the area and the amenity of neighbours through minimum setbacks of 3m (side and rear) and 10m (front).

An assessment will occur to the suitability of the site to adequately contain a tiny house on wheels, and to mitigate potential amenity impacts.

As part of the pilot, Council will undertake inspections at key points in the pilot. We would also encourage neighbours to inform us of any changes to the THOWs.

13. How is this pilot considering environmental impacts?

The pilot is considered unlikely to have adverse impacts on environmental considerations. It is expected THOWs will offer a more sustainable form of living due to their reduced footprints.

The assessment criteria for inclusion in the pilot will consider impacts of the THOWs in the site and surrounds, including the requirement to avoid removal of any vegetation.

14. How will parking be impacted?

We will consider whether access parking facilities are appropriately provided. There are likely to be circumstances where the driveway is shared. Separate approval would be required to create additional access, and this may not be appropriate in some circumstances.

15. I'm concerned about potential amenity impacts of a tiny house on wheels in my area. What should I do?

We encourage anyone with concerns relating to amenity impact of a THOWs to [report concerns to us via our online request form](#) or by calling us on **5261 0600**.