

Better Apartment Living



Buyers and Renters Guide

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Overview

Apartment living is the preferred choice of many people. Apartments are often more affordable and may have lower running costs than other types of housing. For many people renting an apartment can be an effective choice to provide for a variety of lifestyles.

This Guide contains a number of tips to assist when considering renting or buying an apartment, particularly off-the-plan. These tips are a starting point only and you may need to seek professional advice to consider some of them in more detail. Further information including checklists and rental advice is also provided by Consumer Affairs Victoria and links to these resources are provided in the following pages.

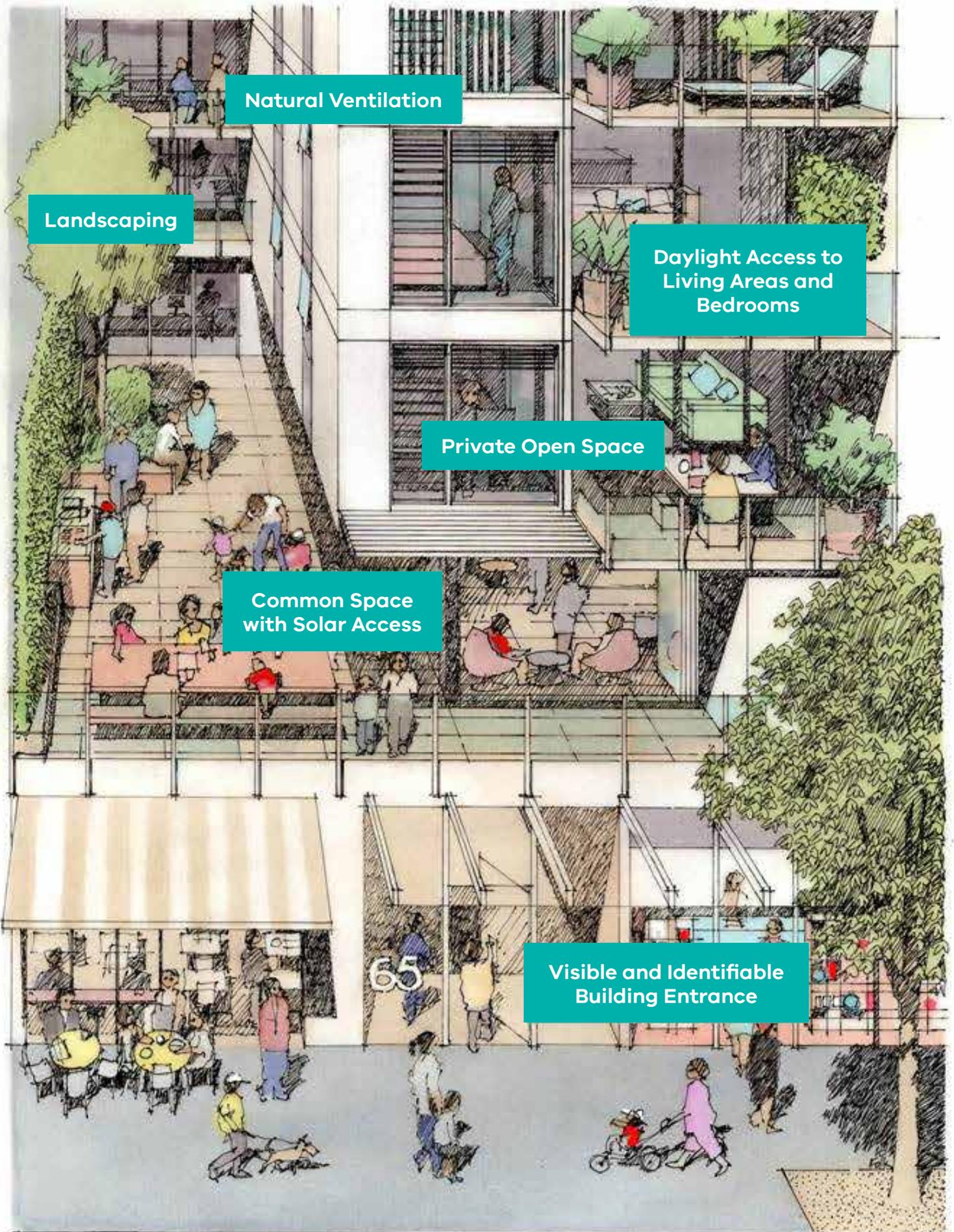
Many of the issues raised will also apply if you are considering other dwelling types. Note that a decision to purchase or rent often involves a trade-off between a range of factors including budget, lifestyle and different design aspects that are specific to your needs. For example, prospective buyers and renters may need to consider location and the costs associated with different apartment features, such as balcony size or proximity to services (such as schools or parks).

This Guide consists of two parts.

Part 1 includes links to a number of useful resources from Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Part 2 includes tips for what to think about when considering the suitability of an apartment for your living needs.

When considering apartment living it is also useful to investigate examples of the previous work of designers, builders and developers where possible. This includes visiting previous apartments or housing built by the same developer or designer, and looking at their websites or other online forums. This will assist in setting expectations for amenity and quality that match your available budget.



Natural Ventilation

Landscaping

Daylight Access to Living Areas and Bedrooms

Private Open Space

Common Space with Solar Access

Visible and Identifiable Building Entrance

Good qualities of an apartment building

Part 1: Start here

There are a number of resources available from Consumer Affairs Victoria to help apartment buyers and renters. These resources will assist in making more informed living choices and can be found here:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/resources-and-education/forms-and-publications>

Buyers Guides

Due Diligence Checklist

This checklist must be made available by sellers/estate agents at any open for inspection and on their website.

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/duediligencechecklist>

Section 32 Vendor's Statement

The Section 32 Vendor's Statement is a document provided by the seller of real estate (vendor) to an intending purchaser. The name refers to Section 32 of the Sale of Land Act (1962), which requires a vendor to provide certain information to a purchaser before they sign the contract of sale. More information is available here:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/buying-and-selling-property/selling-property/conveyancing-and-contracts-for-sellers#vendors-statement>

Owners Corporation Certificate and Accompanying Documents

These must be provided as part of the Section 32 vendor's statement.

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/owners-corporations/finance-insurance-and-record-keeping/records#owners-corp-certificate>

Owners Corporation

You are likely to be a member of an owners corporation if you are buying into an apartment or a unit that has common property. This comes with responsibilities for managing the common property. Information on what owners corporations are and how they operate is found here:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/owners-corporations>

Purchasing a Property

Information on what a buyer should be aware of when purchasing a property is found here:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/buying-and-selling-property/buying-property>

Property Checklist

A checklist for buying an apartment or unit is found here:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/buying-and-selling-property/checklists/buying-an-apartment-or-unit>

Renters Guides

At the start of every tenancy, the landlord or agent must give a copy of the renting guide to the tenant.

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/renting/beginning-a-lease-or-residency/new-tenant-checklist>

Information for people seeking to rent a property is found here:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/renting>

The RentRight app helps both landlords and renters to manage their tenancies.

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing-and-accommodation/renting/rentright-app>

Further Information

Further information including market seminars is available at the Real Estate Institute of Victoria.

<http://www.reiv.com.au/>

Part 2: What to look for

If you are considering buying or renting an apartment use the following tips to help you assess the suitability of an apartment for your living needs.

Windows and Natural Light



Windows provide daylight, passive solar heating, ventilation and can also offer outlook. This contributes to general health and wellbeing. Windows can also lower power consumption by reducing the need for artificial lighting.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Do living spaces and bedrooms have openable external windows?
- Are the windows in living areas and bedrooms large enough to provide sufficient daylight (and airflow) for your needs?
- Is natural light likely to be blocked by buildings or screening, or by future development?
- Are there interesting views through the windows?

Thermal Comfort and Natural Ventilation



Natural ventilation is the movement of fresh air in internal spaces by natural means using windows and other openings. Natural fresh air is important because it contributes to a comfortable and healthy indoor environment, and reduces the need for mechanical cooling and heating.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Are there trees or shading outside windows to protect from summer sun (particularly on northern and western sides)?
- Is it possible to divide off to heat and cool different parts of the apartment separately?
- Are there multiple window openings to allow airflow across the apartment?
- Do the windows have double glazing?

Functional Layout



Functional apartments have layouts which meet the needs of residents with appropriate room sizes and configurations. Adaptable layouts also enable dwellings to be adapted to meet the changing needs of residents. Good design caters for people of different ages, backgrounds and needs.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Does the apartment have a good sense of space to meet your living needs?
- Are the living areas separated from sleeping areas?
- Is the main balcony located adjacent to the main living areas to extend the living space?
- Is there sufficient room to accommodate your furniture including your occasional needs such as a spare bed?
- Is the apartment layout flexible enough to adapt to your future needs?
- Is there sufficient circulation space around kitchens?

Storage



Storage needs to be convenient, accessible and secure if provided externally. This includes secure storage for larger bulky items. Adequate internal storage ensures the apartment has the functionality to suit a variety of lifestyle needs.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Is there enough space in the bedrooms for clothing and shoes?
- Is there enough space in the kitchen for food, crockery, cutlery, cooking utensils, cleaning supplies, and separation of waste?
- Is there enough utility storage spaces such as a linen press, broom cupboard, and/or somewhere to put a mop and bucket?
- Is there enough space for a bicycle or occasional bulky items?

Accessibility and Useability



Accessibility refers to equal access to apartments for all community members including residents, visitors and people with limited mobility. The useability of various spaces includes use by families with young children and the elderly.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Does the building design support good accessibility including street level access, wide foyers and lifts for access for residents and visitors?
- Does the apartment provide clear door openings, and corridor width to enable easy access to the bedrooms and to balconies/outdoor space?
- Does the building and apartment cater for the needs of people with limited mobility? If you were to suffer an injury and require the use of crutches, walking frame or wheelchair would there be adequate room to move?
- Will the apartment suit your needs over time?

Waste and Recycling



Good waste management promotes recycling, protects the environment and addresses health and safety risks. Apartments with good waste facilities minimise the impacts of waste on the health and wellbeing of occupants and the amenity of the public realm.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Are there dedicated areas for bins for collection, separation and storage of waste and multiple chutes for waste separation?
- Is there adequate space within an apartment to separate waste, recyclables and food waste?
- Are waste and recycling services in a convenient location and free of odours?
- How often are bins collected?

Water Management



Conserving water consumption by reducing onsite demand, and reusing rainwater provides environmental benefits.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Are the plumbing fixtures (e.g. taps, showers, toilets and dishwasher) water efficient?
- Is a tap provided to external areas to water plants?
- Does the building collect rainwater for non-drinking purposes?
- Is there individual metering for dwellings to encourage awareness of water use?

Noise Amenity



Designing to reduce noise impacts is important for wellbeing and amenity. This includes external noise sources as well as noise sources within the development. Apartments located near to major roads, rail and industrial or commercial uses may be subject to significant noise impacts requiring careful design.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Does the apartment internal layout separate noisier spaces from quieter ones? For example, if one member of the household wanted to watch TV while another was trying to study or sleep.
- Are toilets and bathroom services located away from living areas for privacy?
- Are there noise sources nearby (such as plant on adjacent rooftops that might operate 24 hours a day, rubbish collection areas, or public transport stops or routes)?
- Are building services located so they will not affect the apartment (particularly bedrooms)?
- Are there commercial uses of the building that are existing or permitted that may attract a lot of people?

Energy Efficiency



Energy efficiency is influenced by the design of the apartment building as well as the internal fittings. Energy efficiency is important to ensure the apartment has lower energy costs and minimal impact on the environment.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Do all appliances (e.g. refrigerator, freezer, dishwasher, air conditioner and heater) have high energy ratings?
- Is energy efficient lighting installed?
- Is shade from the sun provided for windows and doors? Unshielded summer sun can quickly increase internal temperatures, especially on northern and western sides of a building.
- Is there space to naturally dry laundry so that residents do not need to rely on a clothes dryer (e.g. on a screened balcony, with natural ventilation)?

Common Spaces

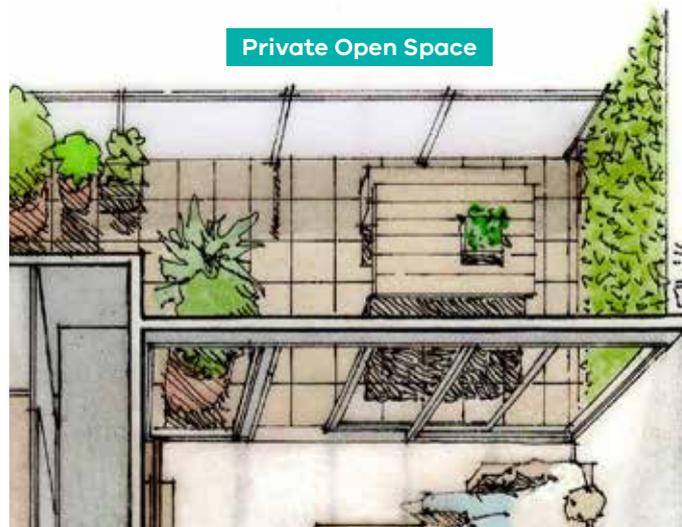


Common areas provide space for recreation and communication for the benefit of residents. This also includes indoor common area like a pool or gym.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Is the common area well located, a useable size and well maintained?
- Do common outdoor areas have an adequate amount of direct sunlight and shade?
- Does the site provide shared open spaces for residents to form relationships?
- Are there any Owners Corporation rules on the hours of use and appropriate behaviour for communal open space?
- What features such as seating or vegetation are attached to common recreational areas?

Private Open Space



Private outdoor spaces such as balconies, courtyards and terraces allows occupants to extend their living spaces outdoors to enjoy a range of recreations. Open space needs to be functional and useable for the reasonable recreation and service needs of residents.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Is there a balcony or open space that allows for entertaining?
- Does the outdoor space receive some direct sunlight, provide shade and protection from wind?
- Does the balcony include a winter garden to provide protection from windy conditions or noise?
- Is there a private outdoor space that is accessible only to apartment residents?

Landscaping



Good landscaping creates attractive and safe environments for people. It makes apartments more energy and water-efficient. Landscaping and trees make neighbourhoods greener and reduce heat stress in summer.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Does the development have larger trees, vegetation or climbers over a pergola?
- Does the site provide trees for shade?
- Are there spaces for green walls and roof top gardens?
- Are there facilities for vegetable gardens, worm farms, or other forms of shared gardening?

Building Entry and Circulation



Apartment entries add to the quality and character of the street. Well-designed apartment entries and circulation spaces create a sense of identity, encourage social interaction and support safe and convenient access for occupants and visitors to apartment developments.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Are there easily identifiable main building entrances?
- Are the pathways accessible and well lit with adequate lighting?
- Are there clearly defined, secure pedestrian and bicycle entries that are safe from vehicles?
- Are there accessible pathways for people with all levels of mobility leading to the apartment entries?
- What provision is there to move into or out of the building? Consider the route, and lift size required to move sofas, beds or dining tables.

Design Quality and Local Services



Provision of amenity services and convenient access to local services improves apartment living.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- What is the standard of finishes and materials in the apartment?
- Is there a public transport stop with a frequent service within easy walking distance?
- Is secure and sufficient bicycle parking provided, and connections to local bike paths?
- Are there shops, cafes, parks and schools within easy walking distance?
- What parking facilities are available for residents and their guests? Are there any relevant restrictions?

Notes

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