

A Practical Introduction to Thompson St
Or, an oral history of a building

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Contents

15/27 Thompson St	1
Introduction	1
This Guide	1
Quick details	1
History	3
Origin	3
2022 Flooding	3
COVID Pandemic	3
Basics	5
Airconditioners	5
Usage	5
Laundries	5
Balconies	6
Door Closers	6
Drains	6
Sinks and Baths	6
Shower drains	6
Built-In Robe Shelving	6
TL;DR	6
History	7
Now, and solutions	7
Plenum boxes	7
Facilities	9
Pocket Park	9
Common Room	9
Mail rooms	9
Guest house	11
Chickens	11
Communal Gardens	11
Laundry	11
Pizza Oven	11
Bike Storage	11
Workshop	12
Carpark	12

Refuse room	12
Renting vs Buying	13
Purchase Pathway	13
Renting	14
Community	15
WhatsApp Community	15
Utilities	17
Assemble Connect	17
Electricity	17
Hot Water	17
Water	17
Internet	17
The Good	17
The Bad	18
What You Get	18

15/27 Thompson St

Introduction

15/27 Thompson St is a 199-apartment building between Thompson St and Stubbs St in Kensington. Built by Hacer for Assemble, the first tenants moved in mid 2024. Originally promoted as a rent-to-buy project, Assemble is now also including direct rentals in the project (see also [Renting vs Buying](#)).

Curiously, the building also includes Assemble's own offices (nominally labelled as '19 Thompson St') on the north side of the [Pocket Park](#), opposite the [Common Room](#). Despite being at the heart of one of their own buildings, it's purely a business space - they provide no facility to engage with the tenants in the building (no service counter, etc).

This Guide

As with all new apartment buildings, Thompson St has a few idiosyncracies. This guide was created to help answer a few of the more common questions we regularly see asked (particularly in the [WhatsApp Community](#).)

This guide isn't official, and isn't connected to Assemble in any way. We'll try to keep it as up to date as possible, and always recommend [checking for the newest version](#). Fixes and ideas for new sections very welcome! The source material to build (or improve) this document is available [here](#).

Quick details

Before anything else, here's a few quick contact options.

- **Assemble building-specific contact email:**

thompson@assemblecommunities.com

- **Assemble emergency number:**

03 9070 0999

- **Residents Sub Committee email:**

1527thompsonst@gmail.com

History

Origin

Thompson St is Assemble's third project - their second (after Albermarle St) envisioned as Build-to-Rent-to-Own (known as the [Purchase Pathway](#)).

Unfortunately, due to the [2022 Flooding](#) and the [COVID Pandemic](#) the project faced long delays, and a challenging scaling back of scope, with tenants finally moving in in June 2024.

2022 Flooding

In October 2022 substantial flooding affect a number of suburbs in the west of Melbourne. ([Flemington racecourse famously deployed a heavily criticised flood wall](#)).

As a result [Melbourne Water revamped its flood modelling](#), which led to many new construction projects modifying their designs, including Thompson St. These changes are most noticable in the car park entrance (an extremely steep ramp up and down, over the flood barrier) and the [Pocket Park](#) - originally designed as a gentle grade up from street level, the park is now roughly a metre higher than orifinally designed, flanked by steep stairs paired with hastily added lifts for mobility access.

COVID Pandemic

Many construction projects floundered during the pandemic. In Thompsons St's case, the timeline blew out by about two years, and the strain on the budget forced several small changes in the delivered building.

Basics

Thompson St apartments are arranged across 7 floors in a ‘C’ shape around a central west-facing space (referred to as the **Pocket Park**) varying in size from small ‘studio’ variants, through larger two and three bedroom configurations.

Apartments feature built-in reverse-cycle **Airconditioners**, small closet ‘European-style’ **Laundries** and **Balconies** - other points of interest are the **Door Closers** and the **Built-In Robe Shelving**. (For information about the built-in wifi, look at **Internet**.)

Note: the ‘15 Thompson St’ address was created for this building (causing some initial challenges with post and other services expecting legitimate postal addresses) - the address *86 Stubbs St* maps neatly to the central staircase on the west side of the building, and works well for visitors/taxi pickups, etc, that you don’t want negotiating the crowded conditions of Thompson St.

Airconditioners

Thompson St air conditioners are Fujitsu split-systems, with the main unit mounted on the roof of the building, plumbed down to each apartment individually, with one or more devices installed in bedrooms and/or living areas.

Usage

The air conditioner units can be a little confusing to use, particularly if you have more than one. Particularly, they don’t like different devices in the same split system being set to different modes (think fan in the living area, cooling in the master bedroom) and might appear to refuse to start if configured that way. They can also be temperamental about their filters (flashing a red light that requires a button press on the remote to clear) and if your apartment is too close to the head unit, you might hear significant gurgling noises, due to insufficient refrigerant in the too-short pipes.

Laundries

The primary surprise with the in-apartment laundries is: the light (which engages the ventilation fan) must be turned on for the power points inside the laundry to become active. This isn’t displayed anywhere, and wasn’t clearly communicated to new tenants when they moved in, causing a lot of confusion.

Balconies

Balconies have a ‘flow-under’ tiling solution similar to other common areas like the **Pocket Park**. Water *does* pass under the tiles, it *can* get dirty/smelly under there, and Assemble *does* consider it your responsibility to carefully lever them up and clean underneath. They provide no guidance on how to do this safely, or what tools to use.

Door Closers

A familiar sound around the building is the crash of an apartment door slamming closed. Each front door is fitted with a closer, but they’re often configured very aggressively. This video includes guidance on how to tweak them: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwyMbfPh8Ig>

Note: I’m not kidding about ‘aggressively’ - ensure children and pets are kept safe around closing doors, particularly in high wind.

Drains

Sinks and Baths

The sink and bath drains use spring-loaded plugs that sit in the top of the drain, which can be lifted out for cleaning and tuning. A known issue with them is the thin plastic ring that provides the seal when the plug is engaged - it can easily come loose and then the plug will no longer seal. It can usually be found in the body of the plug, and carefully reseated.

Shower drains

Shower drains are covered with a square panel, which sits on four plastic feet, which clip on around the corners of the panel.

If you’ve ever tried to lift and clean around one of these panels, there’s a good chance you’ve had one of these feet pop off unexpectedly - and if that happens, there’s a decent chance you then lost it down the shower drain. This is a common experience, and generally tenants seem to find they get better drainage (and easier access) with one less foot; while we haven’t been able to identify a supplier for these feet, if you’re concerned, some enterprising tenants have been 3D printing replacements - maybe asking in the **WhatsApp Community**.

Built-In Robe Shelving

TL;DR

For various reasons the shelves in your built-in robes might be missing or an unexpected configuration. Ask in the **WhatsApp Community** for help finding shelves that suit you if you don’t have ones that serve your needs.

History

When tenants first moved in in 2024, we were surprised to discover our built-in robes had cavities for shelves, but no actual shelves. When asked, Assemble explained that the spaces were configured to be the size of standard IKEA shelves, and rather than a cost-saving measure on their part, it was an opportunity for tenants to customise those spaces with whatever types of shelves they wanted.

First problem - the 'size' part of the above wasn't true - IKEA offers a large number of general purpose shelf solutions, and none fit the (roughly 51cm x 46cm) space Hacer had assembled (no pun intended). It took Assemble many months to acknowledge this, though.

Second problem - the expense and hassle of sourcing their own shelves wasn't on the radar for most new tenants. At one stage an enterprising tenant actually bulk ordered custom cut shelves from a plywood supplier, and another group discovered that cutting down IKEA basket rack tracks allowed you to use those baskets in the provided space.

Ultimately (possibly shamed by the the mix of complaints and antagonistic entrepreneurialism) Assemble relented, and began a long, slow process of measuring all of the built-in robes, to provide their *own* shelving.

Now, and solutions

As a result of the above, we're now in quite a strange situation. Despite largely homogeneous design throughout the building, the status of the built-in robe shelves in any given apartment is basically a dice roll. Assemble eventually provided shelves for every apartment, but did the tenants at the time pick them up? Did they install any/some/all of them? Did they purchase other shelves, or baskets, and use them instead? Having potentially paid their own money for shelves early on, do some tenants feel entitled to take those shelves with them, leaving the space empty? (That seems to have been reported by at least one new tenant recently.)

Assemble hasn't audited the current status, and offers no guidance on what to do if you have too many/too few/inconvenient shelving. The community has pools of shelves and baskets that they continue to offer under various arrangements - please jump into the [WhatsApp Community](#) and ask for help if you need it.

Plenum boxes

Apartments have ceiling ducts that connect the bathroom and laundry exhaust fans, and the kitchen range hoods, to the outside world. The ducts join together in something called a plenum box - "a HVAC component used to manage airflow distribution between ductwork and room-side diffusers or grilles." These boxes have 'backflow' doors on them to maintain even pressure, and to prevent wind blowing back into the ducting.

After initially moving in, though, several tenants discovered that (through poor design or installation) these backflow doors knocked, loudly, during any kinds of wind. After a long back-and-forth with Assemble contractors quietly addressed the issue - by breaking the doors. Anecdotally, the contractors are reported to have admitted that actually, most

of the backflow doors were *already* broken - the ones they needed to address individually where the few still acting ‘as intended’.

Facilities

Pocket Park

Originally envisioned as a leafy space grading gently up from street level (to ‘invite the neighbourhood in’) the **2022 Flooding** and Melbourne Water’s subsequent revamp of its flood modelling led to the pocket park being raised by roughly a metre, with the addition of steep stairs paired with lifts for accessibility. The **COVID Pandemic** put substantial budget pressure on the project, likely leading to the reduction of greenery to small brick-walled garden beds, with single tree at the centre of the space.

Tip: watch your step on the stairs - on hot days the black grip strips bow and become a substantial tripping hazard.

Common Room

A large portion of the bottom of the 27 side of the building is taken up with a multi-purpose space usually referred to as the common room. The space is technically two spaces: the west half includes AV functionality (a large TV screen, amplifier and speakers) with adjacent couches, and a co-working-style powered table; the east half includes a kitchen and dining tables, and a small communal library.

The two halves are independently bookable via the Assemble app, and can be isolated from each other using a sliding divider wall.

Note: mobile signal is very poor in this part of the building, but the internet can be accessed via the provided access points. Set a password in the Assemble app - in the Assemble Connect section click the kebab menu (three vertical dots) and click ‘support’ - you should then be able to use your Assemble Connect email address and that password to connect.

Mail rooms

Mail rooms are located on the ground floor in each half (the 15 and 27 sides) of the building, next to the mail boxes. They’re accessed by placing your security fob (somewhat counter-intuitively) against the numerical keypad under the door handle.

Unlike other apartment buildings, there are no staff on-site to facilitate package delivery. (The new Swift Walk Assemble building remedies this.) As a result (and despite detailed instructions posted at the building entrances) tenants have enjoyed uneven success getting

packages delivered - Australia Post is fairly reliable, but other services like Aramex and Amazon tends to dump packages just inside the Thompson St entrances to each building. For packages that aren't in the mailroom you expected, check the entrance to your part of the building (15 or 27), then the entrance to the *other* half of the building, then the other *mailroom* (we periodically find that packages are delivered to the wrong half of the building.)

Guest house

The details for the guest house are available in [this PDF](#).

Chickens

The building includes a chicken pen on the roof, with (currently) four chickens - their care is provided by a community group that coordinates via the [WhatsApp Community](#).

Communal Gardens

The building includes a number of garden beds planted with herbs and other edible plants - their care is provided by a community group that coordinates via the [WhatsApp Community](#).

Laundry

The building includes a group of communal clothes washers and dryers - they operate on a tap-to-pay mechanism.

Pizza Oven

The social space on the roof includes a pizza oven, with wood fuel provided. As an open fire it requires constant oversight when in use (for fire safety reasons). Guidance on safe operation is available from other tenants - ask in the [WhatsApp Community](#) for help.

Note: allow roughly 4 hours for the oven to reach a suitable even cooking heat.

Bike Storage

The building includes a large two-floor bike storage space at the south side of the its ground floor. It includes primarily wall brackets, with a few accessible ground-mounted brackets in the very back.

While initially a selling point, repeated thefts and vandalism (including, in one dramatic instance, a wall bracket being physically torn from the wall) have led many tenants eschewing this facility and keep their bikes in their apartments or on their balconies. The issues seem to stem from the general permeability of the build, combined with somewhat

naively-designed street access door, and the horizontal access from the car parking area to the bike space, via the goods lift.

Workshop

Adjacent to the **Bike Storage** is the community workshop, including the tool lending library (booked through the Assemble App). Facilities include work benches and bike a maintenance rack - unfortunately the lending library suffers from infrequent item return (physically, and in the app) and the space itself is frequently crowded with half-finished projects.

Carpark

Most of the ground floor is taken up with car parking, which is accessed from a (somewhat precipitous) ramp west on to Stubbs St. The carpark includes a minimal car stacker/shuffler (periodically out of commission) two EV charging points (variously usable) and small storage cages assigned to some of the apartments (apartments deemed as having 'enough internal storage' missed out on a storage cage.)

Car spaces were initially made available as requested by tenants, but this has generated some contention, and seems to be being re-evaluated by Assemble. The ownership status of the parking spots has been somewhat murky too, leading to at least one **Purchase Pathway** participant relinquishing their contract and buying elsewhere instead. The bodyt corporate has recently moved to redefine the 'ownership' of these spaces - hopefully clarifying tenant rights and responsibilities.

Refuse room

At the south end of the carpark is the refuse room, where tenants can find large traditional rubbish and recycling bins, as well as clothes recycling, e-waste and even a food waste dehydrator. Tenants are asked to crush cardboard boxes before putting them in the recycling, carry glass bottles and cardboard down to the refuse room (rather than putting it down the chutes available on each level) and participate in an onboarding session before using the dehydrator. (And please don't dump stuff in the refuse room, if you can't immediately find the type of bin you want.)

Renting vs Buying

Purchase Pathway

Assemble originally designed the Thompson St project as a new type of rent-to-buy tenancy, which they refer to as the Purchase Pathway. After estimating a purchase price for each apartment, they vetted applicants for their ability to rent their apartment for a slowly incrementing rate, with an option to purchase their apartment at the end of 5 years (for that estimated price, which was locked in 5 years earlier.) The intention was to have a cohort of tenants build a sense of community over the 5 year tenancy, and then have (at least most of) them purchase at the same time.

The COVID lockdown immediately disrupted those plans - tenant financials were violently disrupted, and the move in schedule blew out by several years, further scrambling tenant plans. Assemble isn't very forthcoming about the evolving nature of the building, but anecdotally occupancy was very low initially, and grew only slowly; which seems to have forced Assemble to change tack.

Assemble's subsequent buildings after Thompson St are primarily modelled as long term rentals - the purchase pathway approach seems to have fallen out of favour. This aligns them with adjacent projects in Kensington like the Local project, and fits with their strategy of service provision (through their bespoke app and embedded service, Assemble Connect.)

Meanwhile, the situation in Thompson St became steadily more complex. Changing financial situations meant many tenants were pulling out of their purchase pathway agreements, but several were also at the point in their plans where they had previously expecting to purchase their apartment, and didn't want to adjust their plans to now include several years of renting. So Assemble pivoted - they drew up documentation for an immediate purchase option (with a new, often substantially higher purchase price) but also started letting the existing apartment stock under traditional rental agreements.

Chaos: tenants expecting to purchase 5 years hence, mixed with a scattering of immediate purchasers, now rubbed shoulders with a group the former never expected to be sharing the building with - casual renters. The original 'collaborative, co-owned' structure disappeared, and something new and disorganised shambled into place.

Assemble seems at a loss on how to address the situation as it now stands. With existing purchasers in the building there doesn't seem to be a pathway for them to switch the whole building to a long term rental structure like their other projects - in fact, optimistic tenants *still* talk about purchasing at the end of their pathway contract, or sooner. But the building seems to be largely traditional rentals now, and as of early 2026, new tenants

are reporting inconsistent messaging about whether any purchase options are even still available.

Renting

As of early 2026, Assemble currently lists 2 bedroom apartments for ‘from \$625’, and invites new potential tenants to ‘register [their] interest’. The option to ‘rent then buy my home (waitlist)’ is currently disabled.

New tenants joining the building periodically indicate confusion about parking in the buildings parking spaces, suggesting that a concrete policy for this still isn’t being communicated.

Community

WhatsApp Community

An unofficial WhatsApp community has been created with a large number of group chats in it. It's accessible at [this link](#).

Groups are themed around most facets of the building, including the **Chickens** and **Communal Gardens**, and community interests like bike riding, music, craft, the book club, etc.

Utilities

Assemble Connect

Assemble provides Assemble Connect as a platform for tenants to manage their accounts in the embedded power, internet and hot water services. It's accessible via the Assemble App, or online at assembleconnect.com.au.

Electricity

Electricity is supplied through Voltio. More information about building's power system (including the solar panels) is available on the website: <https://assemble.com.au/projects/15-thompson-street-kensington>

Hot Water

Hot Water is generated on site with power supplied through Voltio. The quality is modest, with periodic reports from tenants of poor or inconsistent delivery, usually addressed by Assemble when reported to them.

Water

As part of the Greater Western Water service area, the building is subject to what some refer to as the [GWW billing debacle](#). More information from GWW themselves [here](#).

When first delivered, the building didn't have individual water meters (possibly due to the above.) These were install months later - but due to the above, Thompson St tenants still haven't received their first water bill.

Internet

The Good

Thompson St comes configured with a very newbie-friendly integrated internet solution - each apartment has its own built-in wifi access point, connected to the embedded infrastructure. This also includes public access points in a few places and the ability to log into your own account in shared spaces like the [Common Room](#).

The Bad

Despite promises to the contrary, tenants are locked into the embedded system - they can't access normal NBN service. Instead they're subject to the modest reliability, mediocre pricing and minimal feature-set of the embedded provider (now 'Rush Broadband', previously known as Gigafy.)

What You Get

Rush provides a small range of price points, typical for domestic consumption. They provide bare-bones features (limited port forwarding, static IP features, for an extra monthly fee) configured through their user portal, not the Assemble Connect portal.

The wifi APs provided are similarly barebones, but this can all be addressed by plugging in your own wifi AP, suitably configured. (Note also that the apartments have networking patch connections, from the area where the integrated AP is to other rooms/areas - so adding your own AP might also allow you to provide better wifi reception if your internet usage is spread around your apartment, away from wherever the integrated AP is.)