



older tenants voice

Housing for the Aged Action Groups Quarterly Newsletter Autumn 2024



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

FIGHTING FOR HOUSING JUSTICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1983



CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME



Dear Members and Supporters,

It's sad to say the summer has passed and we are now firmly in autumn. Although with the rising floods, fires, and heatwaves of this last summer, it's also a relief. Thanks to our Goulburn Valley - Hume team who keep rolling with the punches to provide our life-changing service to people in the region.

Coming into winter we are proud to be supporting the 'Warm Safe Home' project in collaboration with Seniors Rights Victoria and Council on the Ageing Victoria.

The project involves creating paper models of homes and decorating them with pictures

and messages about what being warm and safe at home means to us. This is to raise awareness about elder abuse - older people being harmed, neglected or exploited by family members - and how the lack of secure and affordable housing leaves older people trapped in these kinds of situations.

You can see me designing one of these 'Warm Safe Homes' at our last General Meeting in the picture above. It was great to see all the members there and lovely to participate together in an art project with an activist message. I hope you can come along to one of these home-making events in the coming months, or to our next General Meeting on May 16th.

Art and activism are two things HAAG brings together so well, especially thanks to our long time worker Fiona Waters. We're sad to see her leaving but the legacy of the quilt we made together will be left behind.

Be kind to each other, Love and Hugs,

Pam Young, Chairperson.

WELCOMES AND FAREWELLS



In her 5 years at HAAG Fiona Waters has worked in many roles including retirement, intake, care finder, LGBTIQ+ project work and coordinating the Retirement Accommodation Action Group. Her fantastic work in building and supporting our LGBTIQ+ members has left a lasting impact on HAAG, and her people skills and empathy will be missed by clients, members and staff alike. We wish her the best of luck in her new job!

VOLUNTEER PARTY



In December we celebrated the contributions of HAAGs many volunteers. Volunteers at HAAG run three working groups made up of Retirement Housing residents, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community members, and LGBTIQ+ community members. Volunteers also contribute to consultations, to office administration, to community outreach at information sessions at stalls, and just making HAAG a fun and welcoming place to be!



We congratulated Dani Kehoe! Dani who was recognised for her outstanding volunteer achievements at the Social Housing Volunteer Awards, receiving a high commendation in the Molly Hadfield Award category.



Vanessa Heart brought some Christmas cheer to the party, and we even had an energetic Columbian dancer in celebration of our outreach worker Paola Posso receiving her Permanent Residency so she can continue to do her wonderful work housing clients in the Barwon South region!

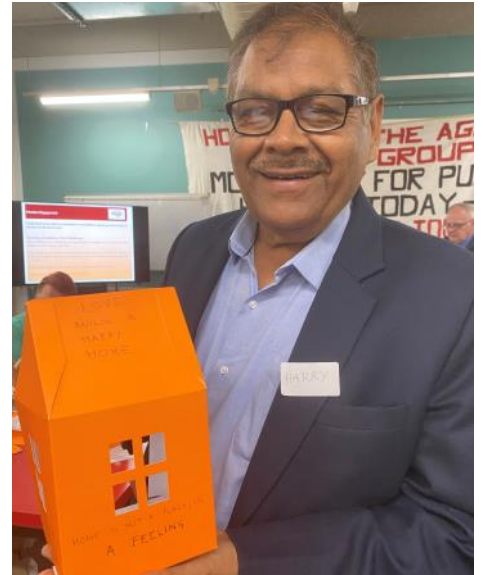
FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING



Lorraine Stark preparing for the February General Meeting



Dennis George with the 'Warm Safe Home' he designed.



Harry sharing his message "Love Builds a Warm Safe Home"



Work on designing 'Warm Safe Homes' symbolic of secure, affordable housing safe from elder abuse.



Visa and Silvio working on constructing their homes together.



A whole street of 'Warm Safe Home' with messages from members about what warmth, safety and home means to them.

You can join in making Warm Safe Homes at Darebin Library in Preston on Tuesday the 4th of June at 11am.



HAAG General Meeting

11am - 12:30pm
Thursday 16th of May

In Person:
Level 4, 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne
Online:
oldertenants.org.au/maymeeting

Celebrating Volunteer Week
Sharing our video
“Perspectives on the Housing Crisis”



NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum

NSW Ageing on the Edge Coalition met on 7th March. Speakers included Minister Rose Jackson, Minister for Housing, Homelessness, Water, Youth, Mental Health and Northern Rivers, Trina Jones, Inaugural NSW Rental Commissioner and Alex Greenwich MP, Independent MP for Sydney. There were about 80-90 participants in person and online.



Alex Greenwich MP speaking at the forum. A video recording is available on [HAAG's website](#)

Consultation with NSW Rental Commissioner

HAAG's NSW Lived Experience Advocacy Group (LEAG) members and other members with lived experience from the broader Ageing on the Edge Coalition met with Trina Jones, the NSW Rental Commissioner. The Commissioner listened to members of the group and highlighted findings from her work so far in relation to older people. The members of the group advocated for a number of changes to NSW rental laws to ensure older people in NSW have access to safe, long-term, accessible and affordable housing.

Submission to the Aged Care Bill

HAAG welcomed the provision in the Aged Care Bill Exposure Draft that the aged care system offers accessible, culturally appropriate, trauma-aware and healing-informed funded services.

We recommend that protections for diverse population be strengthened, that housing be recognised as a human right, and to fund specialist housing support services through the Care Finder program.

Federal Pre-Budget submission

The submission called for a number of reforms including –

Build public and community housing for people 55 years and over who are not able to afford rent in the private rental market. This must include, at minimum, housing for nearly 260,000 older people who are renting in the lowest income households, living in marginal housing and experiencing homelessness.

Fund a range of housing options including affordable housing (capped at 30% of household income) and other below market rate options such as co-operative housing, low-cost retirement housing or other co-housing models appropriate for people 55 years and over.

Implement measures to remove Capital Gains Tax and Negative Gearing to create an equitable housing market.

Fund the review of Care finder program with a specific focus on older people at risk of or

experiencing homelessness to measure effectiveness of the program and identify areas for improvement.

Increase income support payments including Commonwealth Rent Assistance to ensure people are lifted from living below poverty rate and are able to afford basic necessities.

Gold Coast Homelessness Symposium

The Gold Coast Homelessness Symposium is an event put on by the Gold Coast Homelessness network, an active group of service providers and individuals who are working towards solutions for the housing crisis in their region. In March 2024, organisers invited Fiona York as key note speaker at their symposium “Housing older Australians – Now and into the future”, where she presented the data from HAAG’s Ageing in a housing crisis report.

Other speakers included Lynette Loffel from the Housing Older Women’s Movement, National Shelter, Gold Coast Shire, Queensland Shelter, and care finders from Footprints and Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast. HAAG’s film, featuring four older women at risk of homelessness, was played along with a short interview with Footprint’s Housing Older Women’s Support Service.

It was fantastic to see over 100 people in the room passionately discussion solutions to housing for older people, and the Gold Coast an emerging hot pot for older renters in Queensland, it cant come soon enough!



Lynette Loffel speaking at the Gold Coast Housing Symposium

Fiona also caught up over a cuppa with members of the Housing Older Women Movement, Maggie, Di and Lynette. The Movement continues to grow, as does the housing crisis for older women, yet they will not be deterred! They are planning a series of workshops and seminars to co-design housing with a NZ expert in regenerative, citizen-led, non-speculative affordable housing, Zola Rose. They are seeking support with these events, so find out more by heading to their website housingolderwomen.org.au



Housing Older Women Movement members catching up for a cuppa

Victorian Pre-Budget Submission

HAAG calls on the government to respond to older people's specific needs by expanding the Home at Last service, increasing funding for tenancy advice for older people, increasing funding for early intervention and prevention, and funding the delivery of a service to assist older women to access a broader range of housing options including co-operative housing.

We also need to address the housing affordability crisis by building 60,000 public and community housing dwellings, increasing funding for Housing First responses, revitalising the Independent Living Units (ILU) Sector, legislating a definition of 'affordable housing', establish an Ombudsman to provide free, fair and binding determinations on retirement housing and social housing disputes, and re-establish and fund the role of the Commissioner for Senior Victorians.

Investing in Women

Our new video *What's it like being an older woman experiencing homelessness? Was produced thanks to a Victorian Government Grant Investing in Women*. You can watch the video on our youtube channel

oldertenants.org.au/youtube



Vera Considine at the launch of the film on International Womens Day

Dates to Remember

April

- Lesbian Day of Visibility, Friday 26th

May

- International Human Rights Day 10th.
- Neighbourhood House Week 13th - 19th
- **HAAG General Meeting Thursday 16th**
- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) Friday 17th
- National Volunteer Week, 20th - 26th
- National Sorry Day Sunday 26th

June

- **Warm Safe Homes at Darebin Library, Tuesday 4th**
- **Warm Safe Homes at Melbourne Town Hall, Thursday 13th**
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, Saturday 15th
- Refugee Week, 16th - 22nd

LGBTIQ+ PROJECTS

HAAG's follow up survey to 'Out of the Closet: Out of Options Report' has been closed, and we are now finalising the data to see what the lay of the land is with the housing experiences of older LGBTIQ+ people in 2024. We know that rents have increased, there is a cost of living crisis and that due to systemic discrimination and marginalisation older LGBTIQ+ people experience financial and housing stress at a higher rate than the general population.

HAAG will release this report will be released on May 17th which is IDAHOBIT day; International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. IDAHOBIT day is important to raise awareness of the work that still needs to be done to combat discrimination for all LGBTIQ+ people, and

it is key that on this day the rights and experiences of older LGBTIQ+ people remain in view!

HAAG will also be speaking at the Better Together Conference in June this year about the survey results and housing justice! LGBTIQ+ members flew to Adelaide last year to speak, and this year it is in Geelong – it is very exciting to be able present again and also to have more members of the LGBTIQ+ group be able to attend in person now travelling there is more accessible!

HAAG was also recent re-accredited for meeting the Rainbow tick standards. The process of getting Rainbow Tick accreditation help's us improve our practices to ensure we are providing safe and inclusive services for the LGBTIQ+ community.

FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS



HAAG receives government funding to provide many of our services, but donations really help us go the extra mile.

We recently received a grant from the DineSmart community, a group of restaurants and diners collecting to share food with those who really need it. For older people moving into an empty new home after being

homeless, having some food in the house when they move in really helps them get off to great new start.

Other donations can help us extend our life changing services, as well as allow us to continue our system-changing advocacy.

There are many ways to donate to HAAG. You can make a one off or recurring donation at oldertenants.org.au/donate, send a cheque made out to Housing for the Aged Action Group or make a bequest in your will. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible and all donations big or small make a huge difference



Natasha, Teresa and Anne have been out and about in the Goulburn Valley Hume Region of Central Victoria.

They met with Jess from Njernda Aboriginal Co Op at Anglicare Victoria (above left) as well as local MP Peter Walsh in Echuca.

The neighbourhood house tour continues with regular visits to Cobram, Tatura, Nagambie and Murchison. Say hi if you're in the area.

We also held a community education session discussing housing information along with Retirement Housing issues in Sebastopol.

This work is funded by the Ian Rollo Currie Foundation.

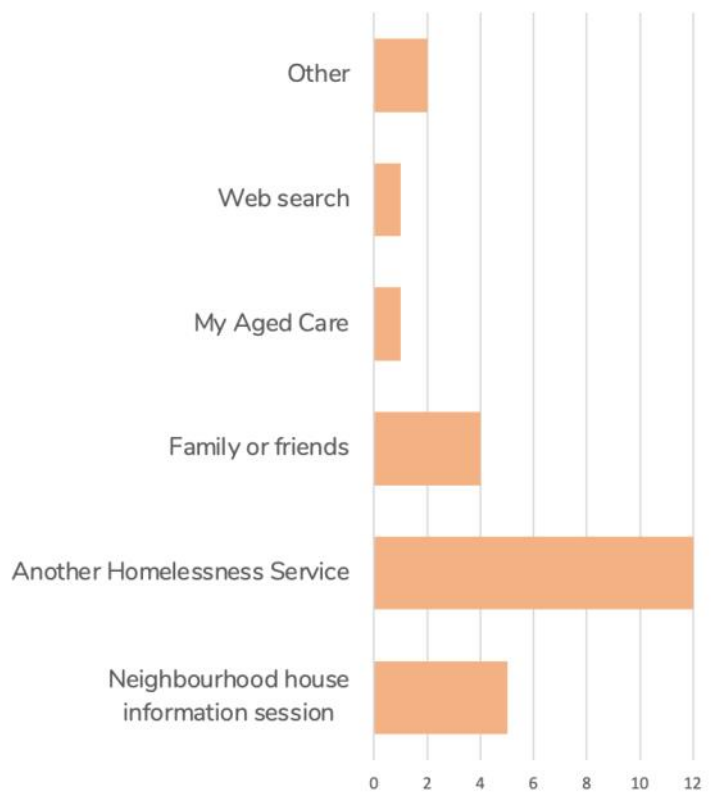


Chart shows where clients in Goulburn Valley Hume Region found out about HAAG, October-December 2023

Membership involvement

Recently the Committee of Management formed a Membership sub-committee. Our member numbers have risen to 800 plus and we are reviewing how we can better interact with our members and provide more opportunities for participation with HAAG.

We have several things in mind; updating our brochure, scheduling member get togethers in regional Victoria and generally offering opportunities to be involved with the important work of the organisation. We will update you as we get on with our plans.

How can members be involved in HAAG?

- Attend the Annual General Meeting and General Meetings scheduled during the year.
- Write a letter to the editor, book review or member news for this Newsletter
- Comment, discuss and share news on Social Media
- Nominate for Committee of Management.
- Campaigns - we seek your input into government legislation and policy development, and at election time we encourage involvement in advocating older people's issues.
- Consultations- HAAG is often asked to provide older people's input into government policy and program development. Participants are paid for their time.

- Participate in Working Groups. We have 4 active working groups who you can get involved with
 - * LGBTIQ+ Working Group
 - * Retirement Accommodation Working Group (RAAG)
 - * Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Working Group
 - * National Alliance of Seniors for Housing
- Volunteer with HAAG - you can help with things like information stalls, office work, providing feedback - find out more at oldertenants.org.au/volunteer

Public Housing Member Call out

We also have a special request for involvement from members who live in Public Housing. There is going to be a Parliamentary Inquiry into the demolition of the public housing towers. HAAG would like to talk to older public housing residents, especially those who live in the towers to hear your views. We can assist people to make their own submissions, and we would like to include the views of our older tenant members in our submission (you can be anonymous or use a different name if you prefer).

If this sounds like you, and you would like to have your opinions and experiences heard, please call Fiona York on 03 96547389 or email fiona.york@oldertenants.org.au

Member Profile - Robert Brierley

Robert became a member of HAAG after visiting our display during the Seniors Festival in 2022. He believes the biggest issue for older people is housing.

He is an active member of several groups and networks and decided to join the LGBTIQ+ working group.

His connections and energy make him a willing participant in the work of the group including handing out hundreds of HAAG brochures at events and venues. He was HAAG's representative for the Pride March this year.

Why did you join the LGBTIQ+ working group ?

Robert: I am a believer in social justice and interested in working towards this for others. Housing is a basic human right.



Margaret O'Loughlin and Robert making badges at the Pride Center.

What activities have you been involved in with the working group ?

Robert: The group attends a range of events throughout the year to raise awareness in the LGBTIQ+ community about HAAG and how it can assist older people to access secure housing. I have recently been involved with the Pride events where we had a stall and spoke with many people (pictured on front cover). We also do a lot of information sessions at libraries, community venues and some of us have presented at the Better Together conference. I like to network and share ideas.

What have you personally gained from being a member of the working group?

Robert: I think HAAG is a great organisation. And I like the social events and being able to spread the word about HAAG. I love to interact with people and am always looking for ways to get the word out.



HAAG member Ricki Spencer with Robert at Midsumma Festival

Manufactured Home Owners Association

HAAG members have been instrumental in establishing a brand new organisation, a one of a kind group focussed on the needs of residents in Land Lease agreements. The Manufactured Home Owners Association Victoria (MHOA), a not-for-profit organization, was formed in 2022 with the objective to promote, advance, maintain and safeguard the combined and individual interests of manufactured home owners throughout Victoria.

This encompasses all residents who own their own home yet pay site rent under a Land-Lease agreement. In other words, you own your home but pay your landlord site rent for the land on which it stands. These are often referred to as Residential Parks, Part 4A Parks, or relocatable homes.

MHOA Victoria is advocating to the Victorian State Government for changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, Part 4A for better protections for those who have chosen to live in a Manufactured Home Village, the majority of whom are aged pensioners on fixed incomes.

MHOA Victoria's immediate priority is to advocate for amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, Part 4A. In its current form the Act offers very limited protection for home owners. Below is a list of our demands to the Victorian Government on behalf of all home owners in Manufactured Home Villages.

- Standalone Legislation for Manufactured Home Villages
- All Manufactured Home Villages to be registered with government

- Removal of CPI as a site rent modifier
- Abolish exit fees (Deferred Management Fees)
- More transparency between home owners and village owners/managers
- Standardised Lease/Site Agreements
- Ceiling/Cap on annual site rent fees
- Removal of the Market Rent Review as a site rent modifier
- Mandatory training for village owners/managers
- Dedicated Ombudsman for dispute resolution with binding powers

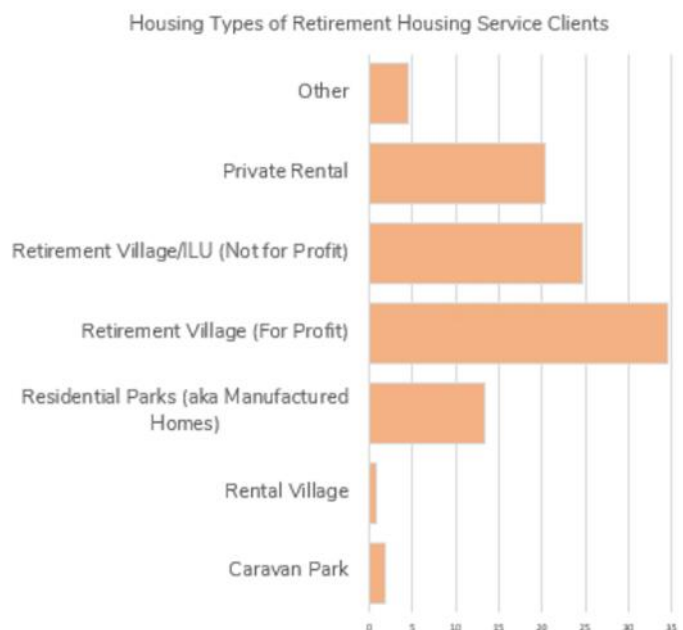
You can get in touch with MHOA at

POST: P.O. Box 427, Kilmore, Vic 3764

PHONE: 0431 347 797

WEBSITE: mhoavic.com

EMAIL: info.mhoa.vic@gmail.com



13% of our retirement housing advice service clients live in Manufactured Homes also known as Residential Parks.

Overcoming bullies in Retirement Villages

Mary* is a HAAG member living in a retirement village in the west of Melbourne. She's lived there since 2018, and enjoyed a couple of good years there before a new manager named Dean* started in late 2019. Mary soon noticed tensions developing between her and Dean, but within a year these had erupted into outright harassment and bullying by the manager.

Dean sent Mary sarcastic and insulting emails, criticised her diet, ignored her requests, and even confiscated a chair she liked to sit in from a common area (telling her in writing he was doing this to punish her). This ongoing bullying culminated in an argument in the village dining room where, in front of other residents, he raised his voice and yelled aggressive and belittling comments at Mary.

This outburst was so severe that Dean's superior emailed Mary to apologise; but that was all. Mary contacted HAAG's retirement team. Although bullying can be sadly common in many retirement villages, it's often hard for us to do anything because it can be subjective and difficult to prove. But Dean had repeatedly insulted Mary both in writing and in front of witnesses – a trail of evidence that made it unmistakably clear that this was a deliberate pattern of behaviour.

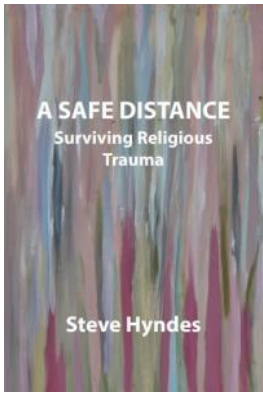
Mary's case worker compiled the evidence and sent it to the village. Soon, the village

arranged for an "independent investigator" to consider the complaint. While they never told Mary the results of this investigation, the village soon announced to the residents that Dean had resigned and would no longer work there – a great outcome.

But there was a sting in the tail. Shortly after Dean left, Mary received a breach notice with a long list of allegations against her. It was clear that the so-called independent investigator had been given two jobs: not only to investigate Dean, but also to drum up allegations against his victim, Mary. Some of these allegations were so absurd and specific they should have been easy to prove, but the village refused to provide any evidence and backed down when challenged to do so by Mary's case worker.

Management bullying remains a persistent problem in retirement housing. If this is something you're experiencing, consider getting in touch with our retirement team, or getting involved in our RAAG group to campaign for better protections for residents across Victoria.





In “A Safe Distance: Surviving Religious Trauma”, HAAG member Steve Hyndes candidly shares his journey from life as a Roman Catholic priest to building a new life with his wife Paula

and a growing family. From the age of 15, Steve felt the pull towards priesthood, but it wasn't until 17 that he entered the seminary, unaware of the cult-like nature of the church's doctrines.

Steve exposes the harsh realities of priesthood, where bullying and emotional manipulation were rampant. Despite his initial dedication, doubts began to creep in, especially when faced with the news of Paula's pregnancy. This pivotal moment led him to question his place in the church and ultimately choose a different path.

Transitioning out of the priesthood proved challenging, causing Steve to grapple with fears of failure and low self-esteem. Fortunately, their circumstances were not totally dire with his wife Paula's nursing qualification and management skills providing some income stability. With Paula's unwavering support and professional guidance, they navigated through various employment opportunities across different community services settings in New South Wales, Northern Territory and Victoria.

Throughout his narrative, Steve explores the lingering trauma of his indoctrination and the journey towards reclaiming his identity. Counselling and the support of loved ones played a crucial role in his healing process, allowing him to confront his past and move forward.

Towards the end of the book, Steve delves into the broader issues with religious institutions, shedding light on matters of abuse and corruption, the problems and fallacies of the Church and religious cults. Despite the daunting task of questioning deeply ingrained beliefs, Steve's and Paula's resilience stand as a testament to the human spirit's capacity to overcome adversity.

The book offers prospective readers facing difficult circumstances a beacon of hope, demonstrating that life can indeed take unexpected turns, yet ultimately lead to newfound strength and resilience. I found the book to be authentic, inspiring, and profoundly moving, as it delves into the depths of religious trauma and the journey towards healing and self-discovery. It was a privilege to meet the author himself, and I encourage others to read his book. I look forward to hearing Paula's account of her life's journey entering and leaving the Mercy Order of Nuns. - Esma Becirevic

Readers who would like a copy of the book can pick up a copy from Reuben in the HAAG office for a small donation, or make a \$15 donation and we will post one to you..



The Colours of Life - painting by Steve Hyndes

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Fighting for Housing Justice for older people since 1983

HAAG offers FREE confidential advice, housing and support to over-50's



The three monkeys Robert, Peter and Garry at the Midsumma Festival. Cover photo Robert, Danni and

- Housing Options Information
- Outreach Housing Support
- Retirement Housing Advice & Support
- Research & Policy Development