



older tenants voice

Housing for the Aged Action Groups Quarterly Newsletter Summer 2022



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

FIGHTING FOR HOUSING JUSTICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1983





Dear Readers ,

As the newly appointed Chairperson of the Committee of Management I am very honoured to take over from Phyll Williams who after many years of great service has decided to retire. Phyll was one of the first people who not only welcomed me to the Committee four years ago but also gave me insight and enormous support and help to fit into the family of HAAG. Phyll has done a tremendous job. I have big shoes to fill.

This is my first opportunity to introduce myself to the Members and Staff of HAAG who do not already know me.

I am retired and belong to two Societies mostly connected to Music which is my love. Jazz to Classical I love Music and the happiness it brings to people. I live in Independent living in Armadale and exist with a pension and a loving and generous son who helps me from time to time. In all I am a very lucky happy lady. At present in my spare time I crochet bonnets and hats for the premature babies at the Frankston hospital. I am also a radio presenter on community radio which I have been involved in for over 26 years. Next year I will be 80 years young!

I have carried out the position of Secretary and Vice Chair on the committee and also joined sub committees of Governance and Human Resources, and am very happy to be

part of such a wonderful organization. The Staff are so dedicated and the comradeship is so strong which makes it such a happy place to come to. I will endeavor to carry out the position of Chair to the best of my abilities.

I have also been involved in the program that Shane McGrath and Fiona York put to air every week on 3CR. It's called Raise the Roof and its very interesting with interviews with various people and information about what HAAG is doing and Housing issues. Have a listen 3CR 88.55AM Wednesdays every second week at 5.30.

It was so nice to have a face to face and hybrid meeting for the AGM. I welcome the new and nominated persons to their positions and look forward to another great year, I am sure you will enjoy your time on the Committee.

With the past years being so restrictive because of the pandemic I wish to congratulate the staff on the fantastic job they have done, they continued working from home and from the office on occasions, and managed to house homeless people throughout this trying time. The positivity and the warmth I feel when attending meetings makes me feel confident that good things are ahead.

With the changes in Government this year I am excited to see what happens in the next few years in the homeless and housing area. We have already been speaking with politicians and getting their views on Aged housing etc, and contact with your local MP is important. We had a great result from the letters that our members sent off to politicians before the last election.

I would like to finish this with thanks to all, Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to everyone and see you in 2023 healthy and happy, Pam Young, Chairperson



Members of our new committee, from left to right, Margaret O’Laughlin, Maeve Browne-Cooper, Kris Spark, Karen Abols, Ann Bronwell, Pam Young. Committee members not pictured are Andrew Rogers, Hoda Nahal, and Pauline Crameri.

Read more about all our committee members at oldertenants.org.au/i-want-change/about-haag/haag-committee-of-management

Photos by Guruswamy Perumal

Welcome Ann!

Joining our committee as a General Member is Ann Bronwell. Ann is a retired solicitor and University lecturer. She started her working life as an employee in a real estate agency, and eventually became a fully licensed Estate Agent. Later in life she studied and practiced law, and taught at various universities. She has over 50 years working experience in many facets of tenancy, wills and estates, contractual disputes, and building and planning matters. She has supported tenants with disabilities to access housing and understands how the lack of social housing causes serious problems for vulnerable people, who are unable to access services to help them due to the lack of affordable housing. Currently she is a presenter, two days per week at a community radio station and is involved with other community activities concerning housing for disabled people and

their welfare.

Our new Deputy Chair!

Kris Spark has stepped into the role left by Pam Young who has become the Chairperson. Kris’ involvement with HAAG began 17 years ago when she started work in Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria’s information service, Seniors Information Victoria. Throughout her 14 years at COTA, there were many opportunities to work with, and support, HAAG, advocating for secure and affordable housing for older people. Kris has been on the committee of HAAG as a general member since 2017. She is committed to consultation with members and transparency of Committee of Management’s decisions and actions.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



New staff member Luke Franz, and old timer Maria Cozzi welcoming members to our Annual General Meeting



Members enjoying the opportunity to have discussions face to face over cups of tea.



Five five people attended the meeting all together



Members were also able to join the meeting via video-link or on the phone



Fiona York spoke about HAAGs Victorian State Election campaign



Our treasurer Karen Abols presented our financial report, part of our Annual Report which is available at <https://www.oldtenants.org.au/annual-report>



This year's AGM we celebrated 100 years since the birth of our founding member, Molly Hadfield. Her granddaughter Melissa Marino came to speak at the meeting. Below is an abridged version of her speech

Molly lived for HAAG, it was like a lifeline for her. It generated her enthusiasm and a strong will to live to further her cause for Social Justice especially when it came to homelessness and housing for older people – and especially for older women.

Only weeks before her death Molly had been celebrating “Seniors Week” and told us in no uncertain terms that she had just had “one of the best days in her life”, demonstrating for a “Fair Go for Pensioners”, commandeering a tram, and talking to the young school children about “Older People” and their rights!

Molly was fearless when it came to “pushing” HAAGs cause and there was many a politician left “quivering” when Molly stood to ask a question!

During Molly's time with HAAG she was able to witness its growth due the amazing research & the development of policy by the committee of management. She saw the implementation of these policies and further research by the committed staff who included Jeff Fiedler (whom Molly adored) and April Bragg.

No family discussion ever took place without their names being mentioned.

In the 10 years since, how proud Molly would be to see HAAG operating on a national level.

She would love to still be calling in for a “cuppa” and a chat with Fiona and the fabulous HAAG Team discussing the latest developments and I can hear here saying “so where do we go from here” – she was always looking ahead!

Congratulations to everyone at HAAG for your ongoing commitment to the ideals that were first put forward all those years ago by Molly and her comrades seeking equality and housing for all.

Sue, Melissa and Emma

January

The office will be closed from 4pm 23th Dec and will reopen on Tuesday 3rd January. You can call on 1300 765 178 and leave a message and we will contact you on our return.

For anyone who is experiencing immediate homelessness and requiring emergency accommodation, please call 1800 825 955.

If you are experiencing family violence, including elder abuse, please call Safe Steps: 1800 015 188

February

- **HAAG General Meeting Thursday 16th**

May

- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia, (IDAHOBIT) Wednesday 17th
- **HAAG General Meeting Thursday 18th**
- National Sorry Day Friday 26th

June

- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, Thursday 15th

September

- Bisexuality Day Saturday 23rd

October

- International Day of Older People Sunday 1st
- Ageism Awareness Day Saturday 7th
- National Housing Conference, 10th - 12th

CALENDAR 2023

March

- Cultural Diversity Week, 11th - 17th
- Close the Gap Day Thursday 16th
- NSW State Election, Saturday 25th
- Trans Day of Visibility, Wednesday 31st

April

- Lesbian Day of Visibility, Wednesday 26th

July

- NAIDOC week 2nd - 9th

August

- Homelessness Week Sunday 6th - Saturday 13th
- **HAAG General Meeting Thursday 17th**

November

- **HAAG Annual General Meeting Thursday 16th**

December

- International Human Rights Day, Wednesday 10th

- Raise the Roof, 855AM, every second and fourth Wednesday 5:30
- Retirement Accommodation Action Group 3rd Friday of every month (TBC)
- LGBTIQA+ Working Group, 1st Wednesday of every month

- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Working Group 2nd Wednesday of every month
- National Alliance of Seniors for Housing, 3rd Wednesday of every month



Dimitra Lagoudaki with Aged Care System Navigator worker Stephanie Agius at our AGM in November before receiving this news.

Aged Care System Navigator trial

In 2018, HAAG became one of the “trial sites” for a new program to assist older people to connect with My Aged Care, by providing one-on-one support and information sessions to the public about the aged care system, what’s available and how to access it. This was part of a national trial, led by COTA Australia, and HAAG was the only trial site that had a focus on people at risk of homelessness. We used our team of bilingual volunteers to reach vulnerable older people and had great success in connecting many people with services who would not otherwise have known where to go for help.

In 2020 the trial was extended, and based on an evaluation of the service, shifted focus away from information sessions to the general public towards more intensive and tailored support for people who were “falling through the gaps” – especially people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people without secure housing and people who have experienced

past trauma. Our System Navigator service consistently went above and beyond all the other trial sites in the country by reaching some of the most vulnerable people through targeted information and working closely with our housing support service.

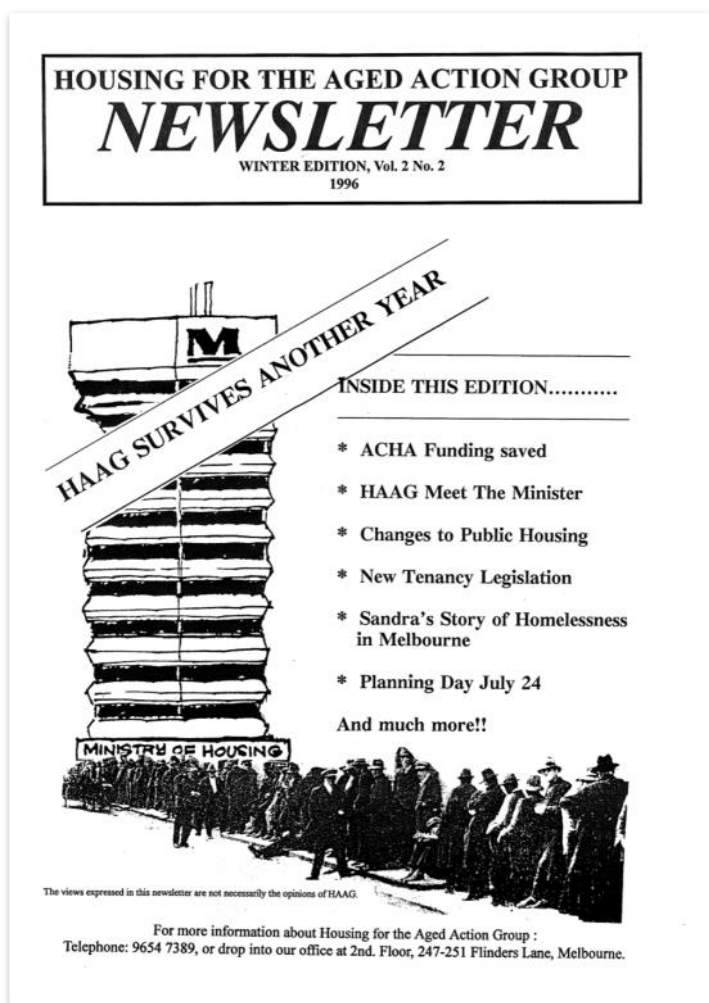
In the last year, our service had a higher number of “band 3” – that is, the people with the highest needs – than any other site. We assisted 180 older people, their families and carers to navigate the complicated aged care system – 145 people came through our Home at Last service, and 22 came through our bilingual volunteers – meaning that most people supported were either from CALD backgrounds or at risk of homelessness.

On 31 December 2022, the Aged Care System Navigator trial comes to an end. A new “carefinder” service will take its place, and who receives funding to do this important work will be decided by the Primary Health Networks, commissioned by the Federal Government.

Despite our proven success in delivering this service, and reaching the most vulnerable people to connect them with aged care and other supports, we may not be funded to do this work.

Assistance with Care and Housing

The other program that is finishing and being replaced by the new “carefinder” service is the long-standing and successful Assistance with Care and Housing



HAAG's Winter Newsletter in 1996 celebrating the ACH funding being saved, only for the funding to be redirected in 2022

program. This program has been running since the 1990s and has consistently provided support to older people at risk of homelessness to access and maintain their housing. Existing ACH providers, like HAAG, will become “carefinders” and have the same amount of funding “guaranteed” until the middle of 2025. But the focus of the new service is not housing and homelessness but aged care. We have spent the last year fighting hard to keep the housing focus in the new guidelines, but we have grave fears that this will be lost as new providers with no experience in housing and homelessness come in, and long-term providers are leaving.

The Department will no longer have oversight of the program, as it has been “farmed out” to the Primary Health Networks, who are making the decision on who is funded and who is not.

At a time when the housing crisis for older people is getting worse, it does not seem like a good idea to dismantle long running and successful programs that support older people at risk of homelessness. But only time will tell.

A new working group for older renters

HAAG is thinking about starting a working group for older renters who'd like to improve conditions in rental housing. At the moment we have the Retirement Accommodation Action Group working on issues in retirement villages and residential park, but we haven't had a group to deal with the issues that are common in private rental and public and community housing. With rents rising across the state, it's past time we started organising for better rights and protections for older tenants.

After looking through our membership data published in the last edition of *Older Tenant's Voice*, and noticing that so many HAAG members live in private rental, as well as renting in Public and Community Housing, we hope that members will want to get more involved in a working group that specifically represents their housing situation.

So we want to hear from you! Would you want to be involved? If so, are meetings in person or online better? What should the group focus on?

If you have any ideas or want to get involved, please email Shane McGrath on shane.mcgrath@oldertenants.org.au

Radio 3cr and Raise the Roof have your summertime listening sorted, with both a podcast and songlist for everything housing related, tune in at 3cr.org.au/haag, or subscribe to the show wherever you get your podcasts

“Office Politics”

Shane and Fiona talk to Simon Robinson, managing director of not-for-profit research firm Office about their recently release reports to Retain, Repair and Reinvest in the Ascot Vale and Barack Beacon public housing estates.

“A Dog of an Act”

Shane and Fiona talk to Lawrie Robertson, Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria, about the good and the bad of living in Retirement Villages, the issues with current laws, and what residents would like to see under a new Act.

“Public Housing Front Line”

Fiona and Shane talk to Kerrie Byrne from the Save Public Housing Collective and Public Housing Front Line about the state of public housing in Victoria and their rallies calling for action on the backlog of repairs and maintenance, the "embargo" on rent rebates and complaints.

Playlist of the Season

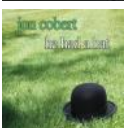
Renters have a lots to sing, rap, scream and shout about, so we've put together playlists of some of the best renter songwriters, renter punks and renter rappers which we will feature in each newsletter of 2023. But most of all, renters are the masters of the blues, the roots of all modern music, so in this edition we bring you our top ten renter's blues songs of all time. You can listen to this playlist on spotify at oldertenants.org.au/blues



Rent Strike Blues -
Jimmy Collier



House Rent Blues -
John Lee Hooker



The Rent Is Too Damn High -
Jon Cobert



One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer -
George Thorogood & The Destroyers



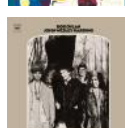
Raisin' the Rent-
Duke Ellington



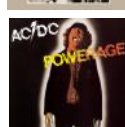
Ballad of the Landlord-
Ray Kamalay



Dead End Street -
The Kinks



Dear Landlord -
Bob Dylan



Down Payment Blues -
AC/DC



Homeless Child -
Ben Harper

“Lady in the Van” (2015) is the “mostly true” story of an older homeless woman who imposes herself on the well-to-do neighbourhood of Camden in London in the 1970’s..

Miss Shepherd is an ‘educated woman’ with a colourful past. Once a concert pianist, then a nun, she is racked by a full blown Catholic guilt of a car accident, and the paranoia that the police are after her.

Her ungodly stench is quite exaggeratedly drawn attention to throughout the movie, an overblown and childish stereotype. However the eccentricities of her character and Maggie Smith’s make the Lady in the Van more than a two dimensional story.

The real stench that Miss Shepherd brings to the neighbourhood is the visual reminder of poverty, and of ageing than she brings to the street of young middle class professionals. She refuses to be moved along or be made invisible, instead painting her van bright yellow, making her presence known.

For Alan Bennet (Alex Jennings), a single, gay playwright who has just moved into the neighbourhood, she is a reminder of his guilt about his own mother, who he has abandoned to an old people’s home. He is in two minds about allowing the lady to park in his driveway. He is portrayed by two versions of himself, the writer and the real life person, a clunky device that makes it seem like he is in a relationship with himself. It is also vaguely suggested that he is sleeping with younger actors who visit his home, to the displeasure of Miss Shepherd. The coyness with which the film addresses homosexuality makes it seem like this film was made in 1970, not 2015. The clash of morality between the generous, gay, modern playwright, and the rude, Catholic, old fashioned Miss Shepherd is a theme of the movie, but the conflict isn’t brought to the fore.

Miss Shepherds’ unpleasant disposition might make audiences feel as though she ‘chose’ to be in such a situation, but as she explains to Alan, “I didn’t choose - I was chosen”. The tragic situation that led to her becoming homeless is also shown to be a product of a society who look away from and reject women like her, despite her being a loyal monarchist, god-fearing, and educated woman. ★★☆☆ Reuben Endean



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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



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

Members at HAAG's Annual General Meeting in November. Cover photo of incoming chairperson Pam Young, with outgoing chairperson Phyll Williams. All photos by Guruswamy Perumal.