

# older tenants voice

Housing for the Aged Action Groups Quarterly Newsletter Summer 2025



# **HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP**





Dear members and supporters,

I was proud to present yet another Annual Report at our AGM last month. It's great to see the work of HAAG presented in a clear and concise document. I recommend and encourage members to read the report online at oldertenants.org.au/annual-report-24-25 or please call or write in to request a printed copy.

Beyond the graphs and statistics what stands out in the report are the stories that the numbers represent.

As HAAG members, workers and clients ourselves, we know just how meaningful safe, secure and affordable housing in people's lives.

Without a home we can afford to live in, we can get caught choosing between buying food or medication, or keeping a roof over our head. But when out rent is capped at 25% of our income, there's enough for the essentials and we can live happier and healthier lives.



Executive Officer Fiona York presented our Annual Report to the AGM. Read the report online at oldertenants.org.au/annual-report-24-25

Without secure housing, we're always just an eviction notice away from facing an impossibly hard and expensive rental market, or homelessness. With the security of a home we can stay in as long as we need, we can feel comfortable, stay close to family and friends, and build communities.

When we don't have affordable housing, we can end up being forced to share with people who aren't safe for us to live with, couch surfing, or on the street.

So for us as older people, housing can directly mean the difference between life and death. This is not something we can leave up to property investors and developers, building low quality homes and charging as much as possible for maximum profit. We don't just need more 'supply' of private housing, we need real government investment in Public and Community Housing, more Independent Living Units, as well as more services like ours at HAAG.

After the Albanese government's resounding success in the last election, we urge them not to forget how critical safe, secure and affordable housing is for older people—if they truly want to deliver on their promise of "no-one left behind."

Let's keep up our campaigns for better housing and a better world! Together we can win. Warm regards, Pam Young



Treasurer Karen Abols presented our Audited Financial Statements for 2024-25. These are accessible online at oldertenants.org.au/financial-statements-24-25

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**



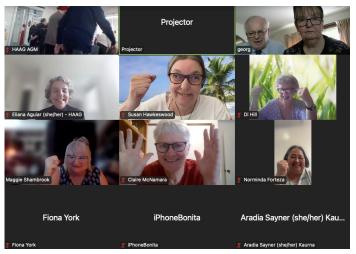
Returning officer Jessica from Self Advocacy Resource Unit conducted the uncontested election of new committee members



Vera, Vanessa and Pam, members of our Committee of Management



HAAG's photographer Guruswamy Perumal was presented with a life membership of HAAG by Chairperson Pam Young. Guru was also a nominee for the Molly Hadfield social housing award



Interstate and regional members zoomed in to participate in the  $\ensuremath{\mathsf{AGM}}$ 



The fearless but friendly faces of HAAG

#### **WELCOMES AND FAREWELLS**



We elected
Garry White as a General
Member of the Committee of Management.
Garry
previously served as an appointed member, He is

actively involved in the HAAG community education team as a member of the LGBTQIA+ reference group and advocates for HAAG as community educator.

Garry has been a housing co-op member for 15 years and has served on multiple committees and boards including the Policy Advisory Committee for Common Equity Housing Limited, Gwandalan Lions Club (NSW), Qld Community Transport Foundation Committee, L.A.N.D.S. Inc, and Avenue Neighbourhood House. He is currently enrolled in Foundations of Directorship and the Boards role on Cyber Security at the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Garry has worked as a teacher and trainer, a small business operator, disability support and consultancy, CEO of a community based Community Transport organisation and project manager for a Palliative Care Consortium. He has also been in a carer's role.



We also
elected Claire
McNamara as a
General
Member of the
Committee of
Management,
after serving as
an appointed
member. Claire
worked as a

lawyer at Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) for 18 years and was a member of the Law Institute elder law committee. She is an expert in advance care planning and elder abuse, and has been a trainer for OPA staff and for the legal and health professions.



Hi, I'm Ranudi Jayawardana. I joined the intake team after completing my placement with HAAG as part of my social work degree at RMIT. I'm also a disability support worker on the side andloves the Twilight books and movies

Hi, my name is **Claire Jones**, a CJ, or a spare Claire, with the fair hair, occasionally a square Claire. I haven't yet gained a HAAG name, there are two Claire's now, so please, feel free to give me a new name!

I've spent the last 11 years at Merri Outreach in theConnections program, which has many similarities with HAL Outreach. I've also worked with Jesuit Social Services and HomeGround and about 7 years in London street homeless and hostel programs.

My accent is broken, a bit Manchester some London, I cannot say book without it sounding like buck. I'm used to confused looks when I get talking too fast. I love all things noisy and back yard fires with pals.

### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**



We celebrated the end of the year with volunteers, community educators and working group members



Lyn, Maria, Rebecca, Jodie and Debbie. Long time staff member Maria has joined the team as a volunteer on our newly renamed Multicultural & Multifaith (M&M) reference group



We participated in the 16 Days of Activism against Family Violence alongside members of the Hobson Bay City Council



We partnered with Australian Filipino Community Services for a Community Education day of "Tastes to Remember"



Dancers at the Filipino Community Education day



We held stalls at the Moorabool, Wyndham and Merri-Bek Seniors Expos

#### NATIONAL ADVOCACY

In November we published the report *Priced* Out, Run Down: Older Australians in unaffordable and poor-condition housing

The report by Swinburne University of Technology, commissioned by Housing for the Aged Action Group, explores the multiple, often overlapping forms of housing precarity experienced by mid-life and older people in Australia, focusing on private renter households and mortgaged households. The report combines measures of housing affordability stress and housing quality and conditions, to show the multiple dimensions of housing precarity for ageing Australians.

We launched the report in Canberra at an event hosted by the Parliamentary Friends of Housing.

Read the report and recommendations for governments to act at oldertenants.org.au/priced-out



Report co-author Piret Veeroja with Parliamentary Friends of Housing Chair Gabriel Ng and HAAG's Executive Office Fiona York



The HAAG delegation meeting with the Parliamentary Friends of Housing



Lyn and Aradia (also pictured on front cover) sharing stories of their lived experiences at the Parliamentary launch event



Lyn speaking on ABC radio

# HAAG welcomes diversity in the struggle for housing justice

HAAG is an organisation supporting older people who are directly experiencing the real-world effects of Australia's housing affordability crisis. We reject and condemn attempts to blame this crisis on migrants and migration.

Every day we hear from older people who are struggling to pay the rent, buy food and medication, living in unsafe conditions, or homeless, often while unwell with many health conditions made worse by a lack of housing they can afford. Rents are going up, and it's tough for people on low incomes who don't own their own homes, unfamiliar with services and supports available and have limited language skills or skills to navigate online systems. This housing crisis affects older people from all backgrounds.

We know that Victoria still has the lowest proportion of public and community housing in Australia, after many decades of neglect by successive Governments. We know that our housing system is geared toward investment, instead of housing as a human right, with the wealthiest few benefiting from soaring house prices.

We are disturbed and upset to see migrants being scapegoated for the housing crisis that's a result of decades of government inaction. False claims are being used to divide our community and distract us from the real causes of the housing issue.

Australia has more homes per person than ever before. The problem isn't a lack of houses - it's that homes are being treated as an investment, not places for people to live. We need tax reform so that housing is treated as a home, not as a way for people to make lots of money. We need public housing.

We need stronger renting laws to protect older renters.

We must remember that our diversity is our strength, and we are stronger together. Racism damages our community, our organising, and our ability to fight for more housing for all, whether you were born in Australia or born overseas.

HAAG is an organisation that for forty years has been guided by the values of inclusiveness, respect, solidarity and equity. Our vision is for a society where all older people have secure, safe and affordable housing.

Our values and vision mean that we welcome people from all backgrounds. We are proud that 60% of our clients come from a culturally diverse background, originating from over 20 countries from all over the world. Our workers who assist older people to find housing are also from culturally diverse backgrounds, with over half speaking languages other than English. Our diversity is our strength and reflects that we are part of a diverse country of people who call Australia home.

We stand with our migrant workers, members and clients in the struggle for housing justice. We invite everyone who cares about housing and supports our values of inclusiveness, respect, solidarity and equity to join us in the fight for a better future, where everyone has a safe and affordable place to call home.



Members of our Multicultural & Multifaith community education team (renamed from CALD) at last year's forum

# Inquiry into the supply of homes in regional Victoria

In December last year, the government announced an inquiry into the supply of homes in regional Victoria. HAAG made a submission and gave evidence to the inquiry, drawing upon our research and experience in delivering housing information and support in North-East regional Victoria (Goulburn Valley Hume area), Barwon-South West (via care finder) and the Mornington Peninsula.

The final report was released in November 2025, and HAAG's submission and evidence was referenced 14 times, including one of our case studies from the regional team. Older people specifically highlighted in the report:

- "The ongoing housing crisis in regional Victoria is having a profound impact on older Victorians, many of whom are facing limited options to age in place, a shortage of appropriate and affordable housing, and in some cases, forced displacement from their communities."
- "Affordability is also a major concern. A growing number of older people are renting in the private market, many on low incomes and facing severe rental stress. Housing for the Aged Action Group asserted that the needs and hardships of these older people are often being overlooked because of assumptions that older people all own their own homes."

A number of recommendations made by the Inquiry align with HAAG's policy recommendations, such as:

 setting new targets for social housing that reflect the need for accessible properties for older residents

- advocating to the Federal Government to increase income support
- mandatory inclusionary zoning for affordable and social housing in all new residential developments
- minimum 30% social and affordable housing on surplus government land
- enshrining the rights of long-term caravan park and residential parks to fair and secure lease terms and conditions
- increasing funding for rental assistance programs
- a ten year investment plan for increasing social housing across regional Victoria
- increase funding for service providers to deliver wraparound support to social housing tenants and programs for homelessness prevention and early intervention.

The Government has six months to respond to the recommendations from the report.

Thanks to all our regional workers and clients for their contributions to our submission and evidence!

Read the full report here

Read HAAG's submission here





# Daryl's story

In March 2024, 84year-old Daryl attended Cobram Community House alongside his daughter and sonin-law, seeking advice regarding his housing. Daryl had

been privately renting a farmhouse for the past 25 years. However, he was approached by the landlord who informed him that the property has been sold to the landlord's grandson and Daryl would need to find somewhere else to live.

A HAAG Housing Support Worker advised Daryl of his tenancy rights and recommended that Daryl speak with the Tenancy Team, but Daryl declined, stating he was not going to leave until he had secured housing. Our Housing Support Worker supported Daryl with his Victorian Housing Register (VHR) for Special Housing for over 55s category, advising Daryl of wait time for housing.

In the conversation with the Housing Support Worker, Daryl expressed a wish to have a unit built on his daughter and son-in-law's property. HAAG told Daryl and his family about DFFH moveable units and the process for securing one. Daryl could be close to the family but still have his own space. Daryl's son-in-law completed the

forms for the movable unit provided by the Housing Worker and submitted them to DFFH.

Daryl began to prepare for his move, spending months selling and donating items and burning rubbish. In the process, he got injured and was admitted to Alfred Hospital with 13% burns to his neck, chest and face.

HAAG upgraded Daryl's application for public housing to High Priority, and he spent a few months in hospital. Shortly afterwards he was approved for a moveable unit, which meant he lost high priority on the waitlist. We appealed to DFFH and Daryl contacted his MP but to no avail.

In May 2025, the family were advised that a unit would be available, and construction to commence in July. Daryl provided his housing worker with daily progress updates, until eventually the unit was complete in September. HAAG assisted Daryl to move into his unit, and he now proudly bakes cakes for visitors in his new home.



Movable units are an important part of Victoria's Public Housing system, enabling older people to live independently while close to family.

# Inquiry into Public Housing tower demolitions: what you need to know

The Victorian Government plans to 'retire and redevelop' (in other words demolish) Victoria's 44 high-rise public housing towers. Last week, the parliamentary committee investigating this decision tabled their final report and the findings represent a significant win for public housing advocates. The report has recommended that the Government pause the redevelopment until they can provide evidence that demolition is the best option. HAAG made a submission based on feedback from over 40 members who responded to our survey about the plan. A huge thank-you to everyone who participated. Your input made a real difference! HAAG's submission was cited 14 times in the final report. Following our submission, our Executive Officer, Fiona York gave evidence at a public hearing.



#### What is a parliamentary inquiry?

A parliamentary inquiry is a committee of politicians from different parties who conduct research into a topic and report back to Parliament. They receive submissions from the public and organisations to help inform their research, then make recommendations that the government can accept or reject. The Government has six months to respond.

#### What did the inquiry find?

They inquiry found that the Victorian Government did not provide evidence supporting their plan, claiming 'executive privilege' to block release of more than 140 documents. They found there were conflicting views among experts and residents for retrofitting and refurbishing the towers over demolition, and that the Government has used a process of "managed decline", with failure to conduct repairs and maintenance in a timely way. It also heard evidence of pressure on residents during relocations, and called out the government's use of the term "social housing" to hide the shift from public housing to privately-run community housing.

#### Advocacy wins for HAAG!

Of the 21 recommendations, five aligned directly with what HAAG has been calling for, and another four partly aligned with our position. The most important outcomes include the committee recommending that the government must publish all documents justifying the demolitions, retain public ownership of the land, increase social housing beyond the bare minimum 10%, implement the recommendations of the social housing regulation review, and provide independent oversight of the relocation process to protect residents' rights.

The inquiry also recognised concerns that HAAG raised about older residents. The committee heard evidence about the emotional and physical burden of relocation on older people, the lack of support services for older residents outside designated older persons' high-rises, and the need for clear timelines so people aren't left in uncertainty.

Three Labor members of the committee released a dissenting report, meaning they disagree with these recommendations and continue to support the government's demolition plan. They did acknowledge the need for Homes Victoria to continuously improve its practices during relocations, and urged advocacy to the Federal Government to remove the GST penalty for public housing.

#### What happens next?

The Government now has six months to accept or reject the 21 recommendations. With a state election coming in November 2026, now is the perfect time to contact your local state MP and encourage them to support HAAG's recommendations. You can use our advocacy toolkit or contact claudia.burgner@oldertenants.org.au for assistance.

HAAG will continue calling on the Government to ensure 100% of housing built on public land remains public, release independent building reports for all 44 towers, fund dedicated support for older renters during relocations, properly maintain existing public housing, and protect residents from being penalised for refusing unsuitable housing offers.



HAAG member and former Barak Beacon resident Margaret Kelly spoke at a huge forum titled *Enough:* Standing together for Public Housing at the Capitol theatre



We attended the From Housing Crisis to Dwelling Justice Forum, free public event which brought together a big crowd of community members, researchers, and advocates as part of the campaign to protect Victoria's Public Housing,



Fiona York spoke at the forum alongside community advocates from - Formerly Incarcerated Girls Justice Advocates Melbourne (FIGJAM), FlatOut, Flemington Residents and the Homeless Persons Union.



"Bay Views for All" a documentary following the campaign to save the Barak Beacon Public Housing community was also launched at the forum. You can see a trailer of the film and upcoming screenings at barakbeacon.com

## **Tenancy law updates**

There have been some significant changes and wins for Victorian renters recently. Changes to the Residential Tenancies Act coming into effect in November, and some changes to the Residential Tenancies Regulations announced will take effect in the new year. This isn't a complete list, just a few of the changes of most importance to older people.

#### More notice

Under the changes, landlords will have to give more notice both for rent increases and many notices to vacate, all increasing from 60 to 90 days, giving renters 30 more days either to get advice, challenge their notices or look for other housing. This might not sound like much, but another month to look for a new place can make a big difference for some people – it could mean enough time to find somewhere suitable and not just the first thing that comes up, or in some cases, the difference between finding a new house and becoming homeless. These changes benefit all kinds of renters – residential rental. rooming houses, caravan and residential parks.

#### No more no-reason notices to vacate

A few years back, the government got rid of the old 'no-reason' notices to vacate for residential rental properties, so that landlords could only evict renters if they had a specific, legally valid reason – rent arrears, sale, etc. However, they left one last situation where a landlord could evict someone without a reason – at the end of their first lease. The logic of this was that the first lease could be a kind of trial period and the landlord should have the right to end it if they weren't happy – but that if the renter stayed on after that, they were protected

against unreasonable evictions.

The government has now taken the next step and gotten rid of that exception. Landlords can no longer give a no-reason notice for the end of your lease. Although there are still too many reasons landlords can evict vulnerable renters, this is a significant step forward.

Important to note here that unlike some of these changes, this one only applies to residential rentals. Rooming house and caravan park residents and Part 4A site tenants can still get no-reason notices at the end of their leases. Changing this will be a priority for HAAG to make sure the same protections apply to all older renters!

#### Standard form for Part 4A site agreements

For years HAAG has been saying that retirement housing contracts are too complicated, designed by big operators to confuse and unfairly disadvantage residents. So a big win for us is the introduction of mandatory standard form agreements in Part 4A parks (also called residential parks, land lease communities, etc). These should help simplify and clarify resident rights and obligations for people moving into Part 4A parks from next year.

#### New criteria for assessing rent increases

This one gets into the weeds a little more, but will be interesting to watch.

There's no set maximum for rent increases in Victoria. Instead, renters who think their increase is too high can get Consumer Affairs Victoria to do an assessment, considering various factors (in particular, the market rent for similar properties in the area). If Consumer Affairs agrees the rent is too high, you can either use their report to negotiate with your landlord or apply to VCAT for orders to reduce the increase.



Tenancy and Retirement Housing expert Shane McGrath speaking at our AGM.

The new Regulations will introduce a new set of factors Consumer Affairs and VCAT will have to consider when deciding whether an increase is excessive. One is inflation – whether the increase is above the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Another is whether the landlord is breaching any of their legal duties, especially if VCAT has made any orders against them. This last one in particular seems much fairer – if the landlord's refusing to do repairs, they shouldn't be able to jack up the rent.

These factors don't completely block rent

increases, they're just more things those authorities have to consider when deciding whether an increase is excessive. So yes, we'll be looking closely at how these things work out in practice.

#### **Standard application forms**

The government is planning to establish an application form for rental properties that all real estate agents will have to use. We are happy about this for a lot of reasons! Lots of us know how complex and intrusive application forms can be, requesting all kinds of inappropriate personal information, and standard forms should mean that doesn't happen. But also, more and more agents are turning to digital applications that some older people just can't access – and we hope the new standard application form will mean there's still a good option for older renters who don't use the internet.

Kudos to Minister Staikos for making these important changes.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Affordable Housing or Animal Farm?

It seems that the definition of "affordable housing" is if you're paying rent and still breathing, then it's affordable. Also how is it that community housing providers are not required to publicly publish their annual surplus and senior executive's names and salaries? Senior state pubic service salaries are published and so are state members of parliament including minister salaries are public. But I guess some people are more equal than others.

#### **Renters Lament**

Here I sit Broken hearted Rent paid up But still getting shafted

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Sent in by anonymous members. Member views and letters to the editor are always welcome, write to haag@oldertenants.org.au

# **Better Together Conference**

We recently travelled to Adelaide for Better Together 2025, a conference of the LGBTQIA+ community. We're grateful to Liberty Financial for funding this trip.



Liz and Garry facilitated a workshop exploring intergenerational housing options for older LGBTQIA+ people, imagining what inclusive, community-led 'rainbow villages' could look like. The session drew on HAAG's research and advocacy work, encouraging participants to envision creative housing solutions that foster connection, safety and belonging across generations. Each table came up with their own vision for intergenerational LGBTQIA+ housing. Liz and Garry are writing up a report based on this session that will be used to inform future housing developments and advocacy efforts.

Garry also ran 'Adding the Rainbow', sharing HAAG's journey to embed LGBTQIA+ inclusion into everyday practice, from



establishing our Reference Group to achieving Rainbow Tick accreditation. The session explored how mainstream services can create genuinely safe and welcoming environments for older LGBTQIA+ people who have faced a lifetime of discrimination and exclusion.

Group members also attended many other sessions throughout the conference, learning from experts and advocates while making valuable connections with other organisations working in this space.

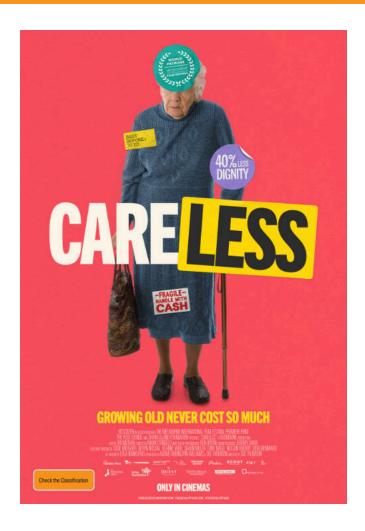
We received great feedback from our sessions. Attendees highlighted the interactive, solution-focused approach of our sessions.

# **National Coming Out Day**



Reference group members took part in a panel discussion to mark National Coming Out Day in October alongside members of Liberty's Pride network, sharing stories about their coming-out experiences.





### **Careless**

In the winter edition of Older Tenants Voice we told you about the film Careless premiering at the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF).

We're so excited to let you know that this film, featuring HAAG's Mornington care finder worker Hanh Vu and her client Beverly, has had a cinematic release!

This funny, moving documentary follows older people's fight to grow old their way - in a country where ageing has become a business.

See upcoming screenings at flicks.com.au/movie/careless-2025/

#### What people are saying about Careless:

#### **IMDb**

• A funny, moving fight to grow old your way, in a world where ageing has become a business, and home is worth fighting for.

# The Scoop: Careless Reveals The Truth About Ageing November 29, 2025 James Murphy

- 6 The film premiered at the 2025 Melbourne International Film Festival where it won the Audience Award. It lands with humour, anger and something more tender; a reminder that ageing is not a future abstraction. It is all of us, sooner than we think.
- Australians want independence, choice, connection, and the ability to age in place. They are not getting it. Yet Thomson doesn't fall into despair. She shows families, neighbours and care navigators who do get it right.

  Careless understands the power of local community and intergenerational connection: dancing, cooking, learning and living together is the antidote to isolation.

# Hello Leaders: New documentary 'Careless' probes the impact of privatisation on Australian aged care

Careless is both a heartfelt tribute to the humanity of older Australians and a bold critique of a system that too often puts profits before people. With its blend of personal storytelling, wry humour, and incisive commentary, the documentary promises to be a powerful catalyst for reflection and reform.

#### SUMMERTIME OPENING HOURS



The Footscray Department of Families, Fairness & Housing sweetly decided to give Kris Kringle gifts to HAAG clients so we can give them a lovely gift as they are getting settled in their new home ♥

The office will be closed from 3pm Tuesday the 23rd of December and will reopen on Friday the 2nd of January.

You can call on 1300 765 178 and leave a message and we will call you back.

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 on 1800 015 188

#### SUMMERTIME SAFETY



Over the summer it's important to remember that older people are at a higher risk of heat-related illness.
Heatwaves are Australia's

deadliest natural disasters and older people are at increased risk. Preparing for extreme heat can make hot days safer and more manageable - here are some tips from Sweltering Cities

- Stay hydrated drink plenty of water
- Avoid outdoor physical activity
- Close blinds and curtains to keep out sunlight and heat
- Sit in front of a fan
- Dampen skin

- Take cold showers
- Eat lighter meals (this is easier for digestion and avoids turning on the oven)
- Plan ahead check the weather forecast
- Know the signs and symptoms of heatrelated illness

Read more about heatwave safety at swelteringcities.org/heatwave-information and from the Victorian Government at seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/services-information/stay-safe-in-the-heat

Council on the Ageing want to better understand how older Victorians prepare for climate-related emergencies like heatwaves, bushfires, floods, or severe storms. Your feedback will help local councils, first responders, and community organisations better meet community preparedness needs ahead of emergency events. The survey is anonymous and takes about 5–7 minutes. Take the survey online at forms.cloud.

## Housing for the Aged Action Group

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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





Indi, Vanessa and Satinder at the AGM. Cover photo Lyn and Aradia outside Parliament House in Canberra.

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