

# Housing for the Aged Action Group

annual report  
2016 - 2017



Working towards housing justice since 1983

[www.older tenants.org.au](http://www.older tenants.org.au)



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HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.





On 17th February just 3 days before her 85th birthday, one of our oldest friends, Carmel McMennemin passed away.

Carmel McMennemin (pictured left) was one of HAAGs longest serving, most passionate members and seldom missed a meeting. Carmel was also very close to some of HAAG's founding members, Molly Hadfield and Edith Morgan. On many occasions this group of strong women visited older people in rental housing to discuss housing issues with them.

Carmel was an original tenant of the Housing Commission in Broadmeadows. She passionately supported her local community and was on a number of community committees over many decades including the Broadmeadows Legal Service, Progress Association, Residential Advisory Team and senior citizens' organisations and Dallas Neighbourhood house. For this, Hume Council is looking to hold an annual award in Carmel's name each year on International Women's Day.

This will be the third such honour for a HAAG member, following the Molly Hadfield award in public housing, and the Edith Morgan student research scholarship at the ACU.

Carmel represented the members who are, and have always been, the true spirit of HAAG.

## HAAG'S MISSION

HAAG STRIVES TO ENSURE  
THAT ALL OLDER PEOPLE HAVE  
SECURE, SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

### *Housing*

Whilst HAAG is not a housing provider we support eligible older people to find appropriate, affordable, secure housing that suits their needs, either through referral to an appropriate agency or through our own Outreach, Information and Advocacy services. We help tenants understand their rights and responsibilities and provide practical assistance.

### *Aged*

Our organisation is led by older people, for older people. We understand the housing needs of our cohort and fight for the realisation of housing benchmarks that ensure a person ages in place with dignity, comfort and peace of mind.

### *Action*

We encourage our members to be actively involved in HAAG by way of working groups, volunteering, forums, media opportunities and joining our Committee of Management. We campaign for social justice in the area of Housing and Older peoples rights and run various events throughout the year promoting the issues and seeking solutions.

### *Group*

We began 30 years ago as a grassroots group of 4 older women who wanted to see better Housing conditions and security for people as they age. Today we have grown to a Not For Profit organisation of 15 staff with over 200 members but our community group heritage still runs strong in our veins. HAAGs workers and management are a dedicated working family, driven by the knowledge of members and the experience of clients, continuing to tackle housing justice issues.



## CHAIRPERSONS REPORT



### *I present to our members the Annual Report for 2016/2017.*

This has been a year of diverse activities and experiences for our organisation. We began the year with an important piece of research, launched by the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Marlene Kairouz. – Independent Voices: Collecting and Recording the experiences of residents of Independent Living Units in Victoria.

This was the start of a big year for retirement housing, with the Parliamentary Inquiry into Retirement Housing and our Retirement Housing forum attended by a great many of our members.

During Homelessness Week, we were pleased to launch At the Crossroads: Older People at Risk of Homelessness, a report on the first two years of Home at Last. Our national project, Ageing on the Edge, went from strength to strength with strong partnerships developed in South Australia and New South Wales. Our work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities was boosted by a successful small grant, and we were pleased to increase the number of CALD members on our Committee of Management in June.

In January 2017 our Home at Last service housed it's 500th client into long term and affordable housing and a special edition newsletter, Home and Housed, was released in June to commemorate this achievement.

109 older people were housed during the 2016-17 financial year which really shows the skill and expertise of our staff, considering the severe lack of affordable housing currently available.

We are proud of the HAAG policies and procedures we have put in to action to honor the HAAG Vision: which is to aim for a society where older persons have secure, safe and affordable housing. Through our stated Mission, we engage and work with older people through community activism, services & advocacy to achieve social change and housing justice.

The four founding women of HAAG led by Molly Hadfield have now all passed, but their influence lives on in the HAAG Guiding Values and Behaviors of inclusiveness, commitment, respect, integrity, solidarity and equity and is reflected in the way the organisation operates.

These are not just a few words but are seen in action daily at HAAG in these times of significant housing stress for so many. In spite of the difficulties we've had this year, we have received constant positive feedback from industry leaders and sector workers.

I thank you all - our Members, our Committee of Management and the hard working staff of HAAG. You are all so important to the welfare of this organisation, and you enable productive support and solutions to clients. We will continue our work in the name of housing justice.

Phyll Williams --Chairperson Housing for the Aged Action Group



## Winning Awards

Housing for the Aged Action Group was very pleased to receive a Certificate of Appreciation and Recognition from Minister Martin Foley, as part of the 2016 Age-Friendly Victoria Awards, and were invited to attend the Victorian Senior of the Year awards ceremony on 4 October at Government House.

## Educating the Community

As part of Seniors week in October, Housing for the Aged Action Group had an information stall at the Seniors Hub at the Melbourne Town Hall, alongside our partners Council on the Ageing. This was a great opportunity for us to give information to the public about our service, and in particular, the retirement housing service generated a lot of interest and drop ins to the office.

## Expanding our reach

In June 2016, HAAG were very pleased to be selected as a provider to deliver our Assistance with Care and Housing (ACH) Service in the Barwon-South West region, as part of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) Growth Funding Round. This is a very exciting breakthrough with this program and means we can now formally trial the expansion of our model into a regional area. Along with the "Ageing on the Edge" National Project, we are pleased to see that this successful yet underfunded program is starting to get some recognition and support. We look forward to developing this in the coming financial year.

## Fighting for fairness

Many caravan parks and residential villages have their electricity supplied by "embedded networks" which means that not only can residents not choose their provider, they may be paying for electricity they don't use. When the Victorian government released a discussion paper in August 2016, HAAG members worked with the Consumer Affairs Victoria minister Marlene Kairouz to generate some media attention on the issue. HAAG also submitted to the inquiry about this and hopes to see a fairer outcome for electricity pricing for residents.





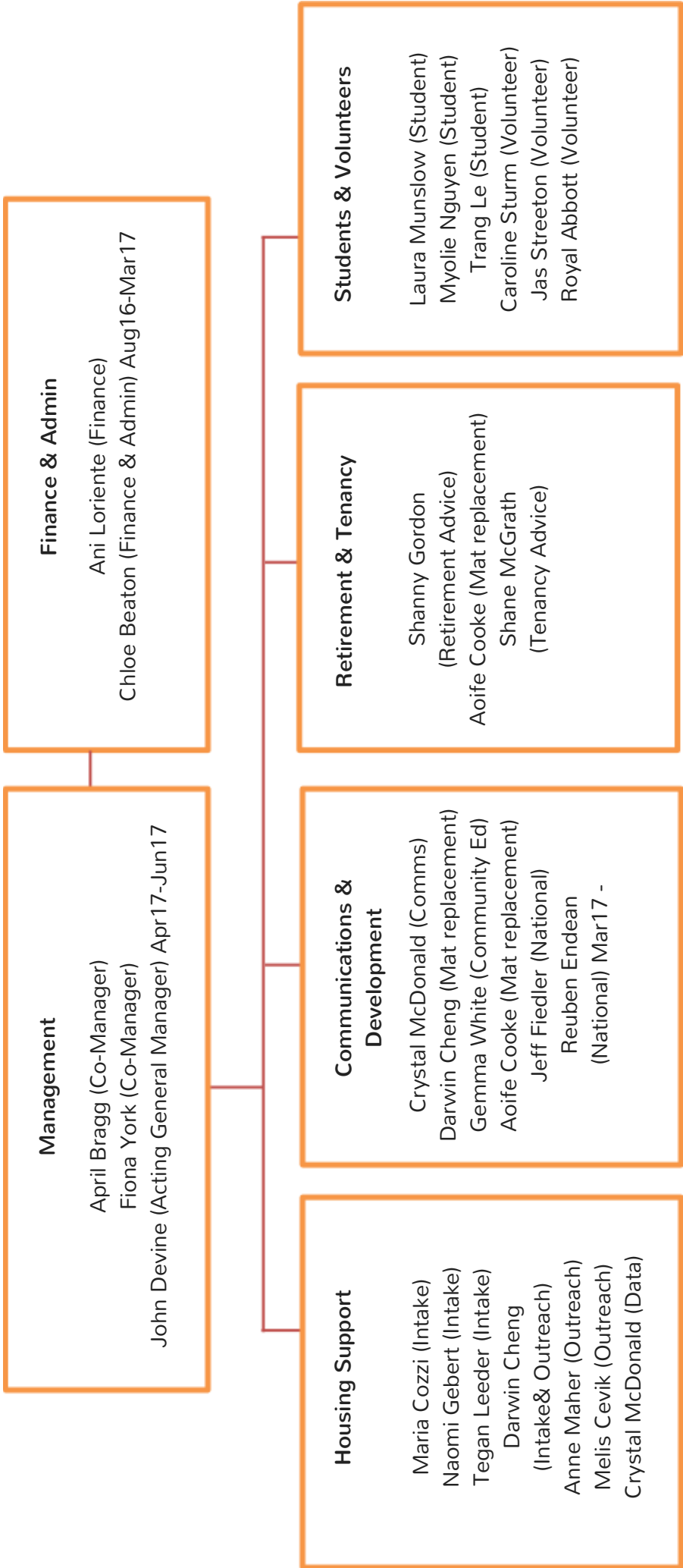
## COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT 2016-2017

Name	Position	Elected	To	Name	Position	Elected
Daisy Ellery	Chair	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Phyll Williams	Chairperson	7/06/2017
Valerie Edwards	Treasurer	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Elias Tsigaras	Vice Chairperson	7/06/2017
Joane McKnight	Secretary	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Victoria Gutsjahr	Secretary	7/06/2017
Gerri McDonald	Vice Chairperson	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Peter Sibly	Treasurer	7/06/2017
Alicia Strobbe	Committee Member	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Ena Ahern	Committee Member	7/06/2017
Barney De Wit	Committee Member	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Kate Inceri	Committee Member	7/06/2017
Bob Brooks	Committee Member	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Kathy Barnes	Committee Member	7/06/2017
Helen Vallack	Committee Member	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Kristine Spark	Committee Member	7/06/2017
Robert Bradshaw	Committee Member	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Mihrihan Astare	Committee Member	7/06/2017
Sally Stabback	Committee Member	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Richard Tate	Committee Member	7/06/2017
Sue Leigh	Committee Member	17/11/2017	2/03/2017	Sue Marino	Committee Member	7/06/2017
Wyn Stenton	Committee Member	17/11/2017	15/05/2017	Terence Thomas	Committee Member	7/06/2017
Steve Hyndes	Interim Secretary	16/05/2017	7/06/2017			

THE PEOPLE



HAAAG STAFF 2016-2017



## Building and strengthening partnerships

*This year was one of building and strengthening our partnerships with other agencies, in order to achieve systemic change for older people.*

Often it appears that the community aged care sector is unaware of housing issues, and the housing sector is unaware of the needs of older people. HAAG is in a unique position to straddle these two areas, as the only specialist housing service for older people of its kind.

In order to address this gap, HAAG initiated a number of forums and events around Victoria. We were able to provide expertise to this area, by presenting up to date information on housing and older people and encouraging people working in the community to consider the housing needs as well as the personal care needs of their older clients. This work was aided by the recognition of “financial disadvantage” as an area for diversity planning in the Commonwealth Home Support Program. Interagency work and forums occurred in Geelong, Melton, and in the South Eastern Region, with detailed planning for a large event in Gippsland. HAAG also presented on housing and older people to the Municipal Association of Victoria in Ballarat and Melbourne. The key message was “If people are to age well, they must be housed well”. We look forward to continuing this work in the coming year.

*The Older Person’s Housing Coalition was initiated by HAAG to bring together services who work with and advocate for older people in order to campaign for better housing options.*

Members of the coalition include Council on the Ageing Victoria, Fair Go for Pensioners, Australian Universal Housing Design Network, Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, Seniors Rights Victoria, Elder Rights Advocacy, Carer’s Victoria and Wintringham. The coalition worked together to develop the Older Person’s Housing Strategy, which makes key recommendations for government. The strategy was launched at the HAAG Annual General Meeting and since then has been used to inform budget submissions and other lobbying by each of the coalition partners. The strength of the coalition has been to unite on common issues, no matter what the main focus of the organisation.

*It’s been a big year for retirement housing, largely due to the work of an alliance of agencies working together to advocate for improvements to the retirement housing sector.*

The alliance includes HAAG, Consumer Action Law Centre, Council on the Ageing Victoria, and Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria. The group has submitted joint submissions to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Retirement Housing, joint letters to Ministers, worked closely on joint media and meets regularly to plan campaign strategies. The strong collaboration culminated in a Retirement Housing forum in May and an event at Parliament House in June to coincide with the release of the recommendations from the inquiry. Each of the agencies brings different expertise to the table and the alliance is characterised by mutual respect and a collaborative approach, which is increasingly rare in a competitive funding environment. The approach to working together has been greatly appreciated by HAAG this year and has contributed to the high profile of retirement housing issues. We look forward to reporting on the work of this fantastic alliance in the coming year.





Having fun with expressive design



HAAG's Jeff Fiedler(right) with Joe Oldman from Shelter UK London



HAAG's Housing Support team



HAAG Volunteer Vijay Laxim (centre) at the Serbian Film Launch

## Living Labs

Housing for the Aged Action Group has collaborated with the Centre for Design Innovation since June 2015 on a variety of projects. The projects include capturing resident's experiences in residential parks and villages, designing retirement services with design students, and working with researchers to co-create tools that enable park managers to provide housing services in residential villages. This year we formalised the partnership by joining the Future Self and Design Living Lab, which is formally recognized as a member of the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL).

## HAAG's National Project

Ageing on the Edge is a national project delivered in partnership with the University of Adelaide's Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning. The project aims to encourage government and non-government agencies to work together to address housing unaffordability for older people. Integral to this is building partnerships with services in other states. In this financial year, the project worked with 88 agencies including COTA South Australia, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, NSW Federation of Housing Associations, COTA NSW, COTA Tasmania, Shelter Tasmania, Aged Care Services Australia's (ACSA) WA, and Aged Care Services Australia Vic/Tas Branch. See the National Project report in this newsletter for more information.

## Assistance with Care and Housing Network

HAAG continued to facilitate the ACH network, which brings together workers from 12 agencies across the state to share the latest knowledge, service updates and practice.

Now part of the Commonwealth Home Support Program, the ACH program is barely known by others working in the community care sector and HAAG is pleased to now be a part of the Victorian Community Care Alliance which allows us to raise the profile of the program as well as improve the links between the services. It is also invaluable for us to keep abreast of the many changes in the sector at the moment.

## Partnership with Centre for Ethnicity and Health

In the beginning of the financial year, HAAG finished up a project with the Centre for Ethnicity and Health that developed cultural diversity training tailored specifically to the housing sector. HAAG was keen to share its learnings from previous collaborations with CALD communities and to embed these learnings into a training package able to be shared with the rest of the sector. Although this work had finished, we are pleased that the training was developed and hope that it can be delivered in future to other housing and homelessness services

## How did we go, according to our Strategic Plan?

In late 2015 the HAAG Committee and staff worked together on a strategic plan, which was formally endorsed in June 2016. We are now one year into our three-year plan. Below is just some of what we have achieved so far:

<b>Provide direct service, outreach, tenancy and retirement housing and casework to support clients</b>	2600 hours of retirement and tenancy service to older Victorians / 1114 Support Periods (1085 New Clients)
<b>Review policy and clarify client service practice, including intake, assessment, referral, including caseload numbers</b>	New service delivery specific policies developed
<b>Client data and stories captured to inform client service development</b>	Client data submitted on time and used to inform At the Crossroads and National Project reports
<b>Client charter (rights &amp; responsibilities) developed, including feedback /client evaluation mechanism</b>	Client Rights and Responsibilities; Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure approved.
<b>Develop and implement a Lobbying plan to engage state and federal politicians and public sector representatives</b>	Fact sheet: Local Government & Housing/ Fact Sheet: NAHA/ Fact Sheet: Older People & Housing/ Retirement housing lobbying kit
<b>Develop and communicate Position Papers on issues of focus to government and the sector</b>	12 Submissions to government/ Evidence given at two inquiries
<b>Specifically engage and formally collaborate with sector representatives to enable strong advocacy</b>	Older Person's Housing Coalition/ Retirement Housing Advocacy Network/ TAAP Network/ Inter-agency protocol work
<b>Review and enhance communication strategy to enable increased sector &amp; community awareness, understanding and engagement</b>	Twenty three (23) community and professional education sessions to 467 participants/ Quarterly newsletter "Older Tenants Voice" distributed to 200 members/ Brochures in ten languages/ Four films overdubbed into ten languages/ Home at Last poster in ten languages/ Facebook likes increased 29% Twitter followers increased 24%
<b>Develop a national strategy and work to expand HAAG services and ways of working nationally</b>	See Ageing on the Edge report
<b>Policies are developed, Position descriptions and performance plans support staff and ensure manageable workloads</b>	21 policies developed and approved by CoM/Staff meetings monthly/ one-on-one staff supervision/team meetings
<b>Committee of management is skilled and well equipped to contribute strongly</b>	Governance training and induction completed by CoM/ New committee members with specific skills recruited.



<b>Membership is increased and members are actively engaged as volunteers</b>	New volunteers with specific skill sets recruited Volunteer policy and procedures completed/ Volunteers subject to safety screening, induction, supervision/ Membership remains steady with plans for a membership drive in 2018.
<b>Professional development options are developed which support and enable staff, committee and members achieve success</b>	Ten professional development courses attended by 15 staff/ Good governance training attended by 9 Committee of Management members.
<b>Candidates from diverse backgrounds are specifically recruited as HAAG staff, committee members or members</b>	Barriers to CALD membership researched, including interviews with CALD staff, CALD members, CALD clients. Report produced and recommendations being implemented/ Website redeveloped to include CALD-specific information and translated material/ CALD membership on CoM increased 25% in June.
<b>Retain, celebrate and communicate the uniqueness of HAAG</b>	History project commenced with volunteer interviewing some past members
<b>Develop &amp; implement a relationship development &amp; management plan to engage State/Federal Government Public sector and Housing sector representatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded Services Agency Panel (CAV)</li> <li>• CAV Consumer Forum</li> <li>• Victorian Community Care Advisory Committee (DSS/DHHS)</li> <li>• Low Cost Housing Review meeting (DHHS)</li> <li>• Local Area Service Network (Homelessness Sector representatives)</li> <li>• Hume Moreland Launch Site Implementation</li> <li>• Homelessness Sector Reform</li> <li>• Elder Abuse Roundtable</li> </ul>
<b>HAAG staff and members are specifically trained in media communication</b>	Members engaged in 12 published stories (see communications section of newsletter for list).
<b>Liaise and build connections with interstate agencies</b>	Relationships built with 58 interstate agencies.
<b>Develop documents necessary for accreditation</b>	21 policies and procedures developed by Governance sub-committee and approved.
<b>Develop data and evidence to build a compelling reason to advocate for funding</b>	Data used to inform all funding applications
<b>Develop a plan to secure funding from Government, grants, philanthropic organisations and other fundraising initiatives</b>	Growth funding for ACH (CHSP) program Participation for CALD Seniors grant StreetSmart funding Lord Mayor's "Youth in Philanthropy"
<b>Collaboration with other service providers to offer submissions for specific projects</b>	Older Person's Housing Coalition/ Retirement Housing advocates alliance

## Meetings and Events 2016-2017

HAAG meetings and events are a great chance for our members to come together with staff and connect on the issues the organisation has been working on. This year we have hosted a range of events, from launches to forums and demonstrations, as well as our regular sub-committee, committee and working group meetings held throughout the year. HAAG staff have also represented the organisation at many other meetings and forums, often as the lone voice representing housing for older people. This is an important way for us to connect with other service providers and keep up to date with changes and reform in the sector and more broadly.

### HAAG meetings/events

Launch of Independent Voices Report - July 2016  
Consultation focus group (Adelaide University) – older renters accessing in-home aged care  
Film launch and General Meeting - August 2016  
Homelessness Week demonstration and General Meeting - October 2016  
Serbian Film Launch – November 2016  
Annual General Meeting - November 2016  
Shanny's baby shower with ILU group - November 2016  
Volunteer Christmas Party – December 2016  
Naomi's engagement party - January 2017  
Harmony Day Lunch - March 2017  
Release of Retirement Housing Inquiry recommendations – March 2017  
Retirement Housing Forum - May 2017  
Special General Meeting - June 2017

### Other meetings/events

NSW Government's Rental Options Roundtable for Older People  
HACC Strengthening Diversity Forum, Geelong – July 2016  
NSW Affordable Housing Conference 28-29 July  
Victorian Seniors Award – October 2016  
Seniors Week – October 2016  
Parliamentary Inquiry into Retirement Housing - November 2016  
Frances Pennington and Molly Hadfield Awards, Parliament House December 2016  
Ross House End of Year Celebration – December 2016  
Aged Care Forum, Mornington Peninsula (Jeff MC'd)  
Positive Ageing Expo – Geelong – April 2017  
Homelessness Workshop, Municipal Association of Victoria – Ballarat – May 2017  
The Big Squeeze, Tasmania – forum on older people and rental affordability – May 2017  
Roundtable on housing affordability, Western Australia, June 2017  
COTA National Housing event, Canberra, June 2017  
4th International Conference Ageing in a Foreign Land, June 2017  
Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Elder Abuse – August 2016  
Equality Rights Alliance meeting, Canberra – August 2016  
Gender Equality Consultation – August 2016  
Housing and Homelessness Sector Reform  
Launch of Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy





Donna Swan (COTA Vic) speaking with residents at the Retirement Housing Inquiry Forum



Most of the Interim Committee of Management elected at the Special General Meeting in June (See page 6 for list of names).



Volunteer Jas Streeton with Santa at HAAG Volunteers Xmas lunch



HAAG Chairperson Phyll Williams at the Homelessness Week Demonstration



Jeff Feidler and April Bragg receiving their awards for many years of service



A fantastic turn out of retirement housing residents at the Retirement Housing Inquiry Forum on 1st May 2016 (see page 15-16)



HAAG workers Gemma, Aoife, Shane, Anne, Naomi & Tegan celebrating culinary diversity for Harmony Day



HAAG workers Crystal, Shanny and Gemma with ILU working group members at Shannys baby shower



## Contributing to policy development

Policy development is an important part of the work we do at HAAG. We take every opportunity to contribute to policy reform via submissions and hearings.

As well as the submissions we make as an organisation, we also encourage and support our members to make their own submissions on issues that affect them.

The submissions made by HAAG in 2016-2017 are below:

### Response to draft policy paper for the General Exemption Order - Aug 2016

#### Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA) review submissions:

- Dispute resolution – July 2016

- Property conditions in the rental market – August 2016

- Alternate forms of tenure – September 2016

Joint submission (HAAG, CALC, COTA, RRVV) to Consumer Affairs Victoria regarding the Aged Care Bond rule – September 2016

Response to Victoria's draft 30 year infrastructure strategy – October 2016

Older persons housing strategy – November 2016

Submission to Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Elder Abuse

Joint submission to the regulatory impact statement for Retirement Villages (Contractua

## Campaigns & Policy Working Group

2016-2017 saw the Campaigns and Policy Working Group take on a substantial review and update of the HAAG Housing Manifesto and Charter. Both of these documents were intended to inform and guide HAAG's policy work but had been made back in the 90s and not updated since 2011. Modernising them to reflect the housing circumstances and priorities of older people today required a lot of careful thought and discussion.

The working group was also crucial in providing feedback for HAAG's submissions to the Residential Tenancies Act review, an ongoing process that is already yielding positive signs of important reforms to come.

The group's priorities going forward include addressing the Victorian Government's plan to transfer public housing stock to social housing providers and 'redevelopment' plans for a number of estates within metropolitan Melbourne; and working on the massive issues around bulk closures of older people's housing (including caravan parks, retirement villages, etc).

If you would like more information or to get involved in the campaigns and policy working group please contact Gemma or Tegan on 03 9654 7389.



## Reviewing the Residential Tenancies Act

The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) has been under review since 2015. During 2016, HAAG made it a major priority to engage with the review, and in particular, Shane, Shanny and Jeff contributed many hours of work highlighting the concerns of older renters. Six issues papers were released by Consumer Affairs Victoria and HAAG responded to all six with submissions, available on our website here: <http://www.older tenants.org.au/haag/publications>

The issues papers were:

- Security of tenure,
- Rent, bonds and other charges,
- Rights and responsibilities,
- Dispute resolution,
- Property standards and conditions, and;
- Alternative forms of tenure

In the lead up to the release of the options paper HAAG was also involved in an RTA reference group initiated by Consumer Affairs Victoria. The options paper was released in January 2017 and HAAG responded to it with a submission that highlighted the concerns of older renters, in particular dispute resolution and security of tenure.

The section of the RTA that covers caravan parks and residential parks was not included in the review (or in the Parliamentary Inquiry into Retirement Housing) but HAAG will continue to work on this in the coming year. Thank you to all HAAG members who contributed to HAAG's submissions.

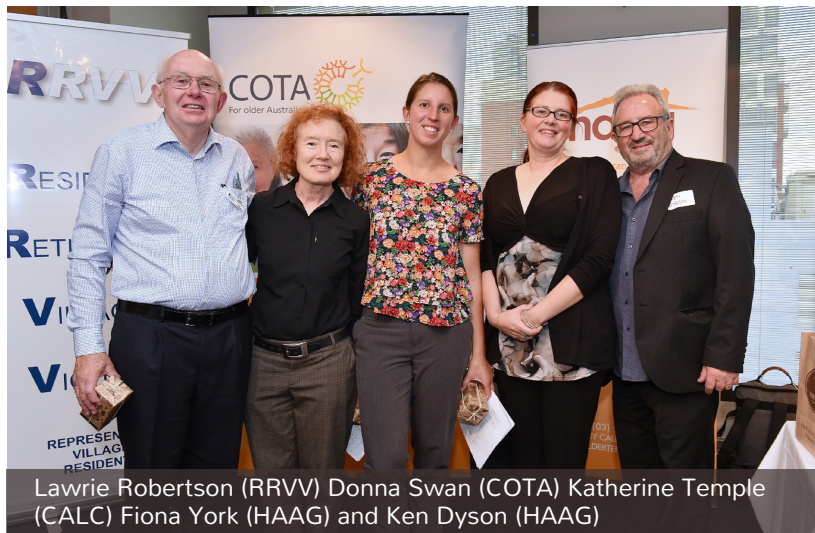
## The inquiry into the Retirement Housing sector

The retirement housing sector has been in need of reform for many years. At the beginning of 2016 members of Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) campaigned for an inquiry into the sector and in February 2016 they got their wish. A parliamentary inquiry was launched and several HAAG members and the organisation itself made submissions.

In September 2016 HAAG provided evidence at the public hearings held as a part of the Inquiry process. In March 2017 a report was released which made 15 recommendations derived from the submissions and evidence provided during the Inquiry.

To ensure this report received adequate scrutiny, and to coordinate a response, on the 1st May 2017 HAAG joined with Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC), Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV) and Council on the Aged Vic (COTA) and held a forum with 140 residents of retirement villages, residential villages, caravan parks and independent living units.

The group were addressed by experts in the field: Katherine Temple from Consumer Action Law Centre, Rhonda Held from Council on the Ageing, Lawrie Robertson from Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria and Fiona York from Housing for the Aged Action Group. (CONT.)



Lawrie Robertson (RRVV) Donna Swan (COTA) Katherine Temple (CALC) Fiona York (HAAG) and Ken Dyson (HAAG)

*After much discussion, the residents at the forum identified the top five areas of the report in need of urgent action:*

- *An alternative dispute resolution process, such as a Retirement Housing Ombudsman*
- *Appropriate training for managers of retirement housing*
- *A process of accreditation for that all retirement housing providers*
- *A review of the Retirement Villages Act 1986*
- *Clarification of deferred management fees and clearer contracts*



HAAG Member Frances Swann (front) with forum attendees and Alen Keirnen from Swinburne (right)



HAAG Chairperson, Phyll Williams

On 8 June 2017 an experts' roundtable was held to allow a variety of agencies and stakeholders to discuss their views on how the sector should respond to the Inquiry recommendations. The aim was to formulate a communique, which combined feedback from residents and agencies, aimed at government to influence their response to the Inquiry which is due no later than 7 September 2017.

All Inquiry submissions and transcripts of public hearings can be access at: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/Isic/inquiry/432>

If you would like to join HAAG in campaigning for fair and just policy like this, or if you would like information on housing options for older people, or if you are a retirement housing resident requiring support call 03 9654 7389 or visit [www.older tenants.org.au](http://www.older tenants.org.au)



HAAG Members Les Scobie, Tina Garrick, Royal Abbot



# PROJECTS, PUBLICATIONS & PRODUCTIONS

The Ageing on the Edge NSW Reference Group auspiced by the NSW Federation of Housing Associations and Homelessness NSW



## Ageing on the Edge - HAAG's National Action Project

The Ageing on the Edge National Project, conducted for HAAG by National Project Worker Jeff Fiedler, has had an eventful year during 2016-17 as the project worked through its early stages. The partnership with Dr Debbie Faulkner at the University of Adelaide was a new initiative for HAAG as we established the best ways that HAAG, with our strong community development, policy and political approach, could best work with the highly regarded research background and skills of Dr Faulkner and the University. We are extremely grateful to The Wicking Trust who have funded the project as an investment by them to see the aims of the project come to fruition.

*The project is being conducted in light of recent research that is warning of rapidly increasing housing problems facing older people, especially those living in private rental housing. The three main factors are: An ageing population, reducing rates of home ownership and significant increases in older people relying on rental accommodation to age-in-place in retirement.*

We have begun with a process of doing detailed work from State to State. Beginning in Adelaide we have linked with the Council on the Ageing South Australia who had implemented an Older Persons Housing Roundtable involving older people, community agencies and government representatives. The Project contributed to the Roundtable by writing a detailed report on the problems facing older people at risk of homelessness in South Australia to be released in September 2017.

Whilst the research was underway in South Australia, we have spread the word and built alliances in other States. In NSW key partnerships with the NSW Federation of Housing Associations and Homelessness NSW assisted the development of the Ageing on the Edge NSW Reference Group that has 25 agency members. The groundwork has also been laid to conduct research and prepare a report on older people at risk of homelessness in NSW. We are then moving to Western Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and beginning a focus at the national level.

A further key aim of the project has been to develop a strong social media profile. We have recently employed Reuben Endean who is developing a national focus on HAAG's website, producing regular bulletins of information and a research library. Long term, of course, the project aims to support a massive increase in the supply of affordable housing to ensure that older renters in Australia's rapidly ageing society are able to successfully age-in-place.



## Four films. Ten Languages



In October 2016 Housing for the Aged Action Group launched four new short films that seek to highlight the circumstances that can lead to housing crisis, and the impact the right solution has on people's lives. "A New Beginning: Four Stories About Finding a New Home" has been the culmination of extensive work by HAAG with culturally diverse communities. The films have been translated into 10 different languages, and seek to act as an information resource and conversation starter about how older people may come to experience housing issues.

The films, produced by Bentwheel Productions, were launched at a General Meeting which was attended by many community members involved in making the films, including actors, translators and voice-over artists, who leant their cultural expertise and language skills to the project.

On November 3rd 2016, the Serbian version of the film was launched at Senior Women's Group held by the Serbian Community Association of Australia, supported by RMIT Social Work placement students Laura and Myolie. All four stories were screened in-language. Approximately 20 people attended and gave positive reviews. The in-language voiceover and use of film as a visual storytelling aide were particularly praised by the community members present. Each attendee also took a Home At Last in-language brochure, and they were active in asking questions about HAAG and how to get help with theirs or their friend's housing issues.

Thanks to both Marina Celebic and Biljana Trickovic from the Serbian Community Association of Australia for their kindness, inclusion and willingness to host the Serbian Film Launch and for their efforts in interpreting on the day.

Thanks also to Bentwheel Productions and all the community members who assisted them to make the films. All films are available on the HAAG website and on DVD, and compliment our in-language brochures for our community education program in CALD communities.

## Report Launch: Independent Voices



Participants including HAAG members at the Launch

HAAG hosted the launch of the Independent Voices: Collecting and recording the experiences of residents of not-for-profit retirement villages report on the 26th July 2016 at the Multicultural Hub on Elizabeth St in the city. Aoife Cooke, the project worker, outlined some findings from the report with themes such as: weak regulation, bad management practices and the strain of unaffordable housing but also highlighted the positive aspects of life in an ILU.

The idea for the project came from Independent Living Unit (ILU) residents, coming through HAAG's retirement housing service, being fearful of management and exercising their rights. Shanny Gordon (retirement housing worker) and HAAG's Independent Living Unit Working Group wanted to see if these experiences were shared by other ILU residents across Victoria.

The Hon. Marlene Kairouz, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation also spoke at the launch in support of the project. Kerry Jones also spoke. She is the Program Manager for Homelessness & Affordable Housing from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation who funded the project. The final three speakers were Barney de Wit, Kathy Barnes and Vicki Gutsjahr, members of the ILU Working Group. They presented case studies from the report – stories of the difficulties that residents of ILUs are encountering.

### At the crossroads in retirement:

Older people at risk of homelessness



## Report Launch: At the Crossroads

At the Crossroads: Older people at risk of homelessness was launched in August 2016. The report from HAAG contained data on the first two years of the Home at Last service, which had seen over 2000 people, 60% of them older women, and over half in expensive private rental. A quarter of people contacting the service have already been evicted, and are couch surfing, house sitting or living with friends or family.

The report garnered lots of attention and resulted in interviews with RN Breakfast and News Radio which was heard all over Australia. As a result, HAAG was invited to attend a meeting in Canberra with Equality Rights Alliance, a national network of 61 organisations, to discuss older women and housing. We have also been contacted by groups, including universities, from Tasmania, NSW and WA requesting the report and it continues to be a useful resource for researchers and journalists requiring information on older people and homelessness.



Housing for the Aged Action Group  
[www.olderrentants.org.au](http://www.olderrentants.org.au)  
03 9654 7389  
247-251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne VIC 3000

**COVER STORY:** On 1 August, Housing for the Aged Action Group members and staff braved the weather to rally in the city for Homelessness Week. The rally, complete with placards and megaphones drew attention to the "Hidden homeless" – older women living in private rental.





Members of the Coalition with Gerard Mansour (holding report): Marion Lau (Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria) Helen Small (Wintringham), Rachel Vanstone (Carers Victoria), Myfan Jordan (Council of the Ageing Victoria), David Brant (Australian Universal Housing Design Network)



Joan Lansbury presenting the report



HAAG Worker Shane collecting ballot papers from members



April Bragg (HAAG Co-Manager) receiving her award from

## 2016 Annual General Meeting & launch of the Older Persons Housing Strategy

On 22 November 2016, HAAG held its Annual General Meeting, which was combined with the launch of our Older Person's Housing Strategy, A Home to Age Well. The Strategy is the result of six months work with a coalition of organisations concerned about the increasing housing affordability crisis facing our ageing population. The Strategy was launched by Commissioner for Senior Victorians Gerard Mansour and it was introduced by Joan Lansbury, a former client and member of HAAG, who graces the cover of the report. She spoke very eloquently about her experiences of being in housing stress, how it affects health and wellbeing, and how important having a service like Home at Last was for her in helping her find secure and affordable housing.

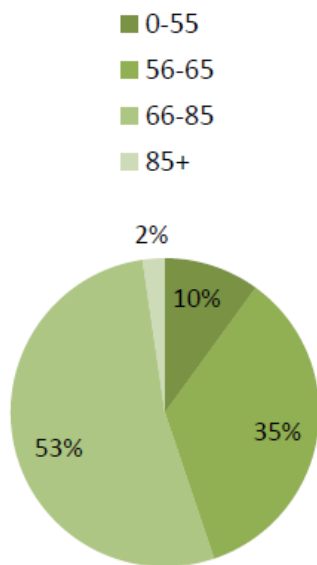
Members of the coalition who worked on the strategy (see first pic) all spoke briefly about their work, and the importance of housing for older people.

The Older Person's housing strategy has been used to inform budget submissions to the Victorian government as well as a lobbying tool by members of the coalition. We look forward to seeing its recommendations implemented by future governments.

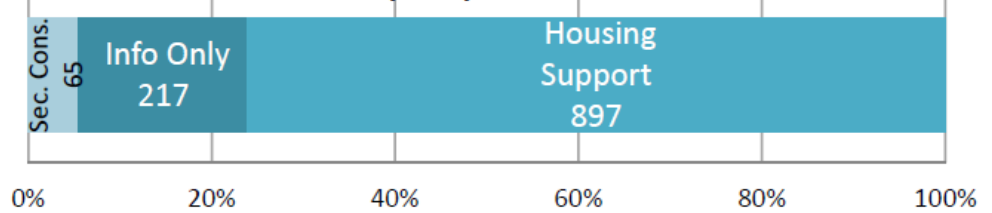
Also on the day, April Bragg and Jeff Fiedler from HAAG received awards for their outstanding commitment to older persons housing justice and two members, Carmel McMennemin and Frances Swann were awarded lifetime memberships for their commitment to the organisation and its aims.



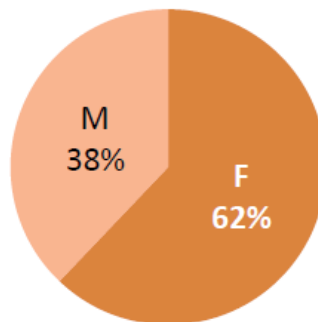
## Client Age



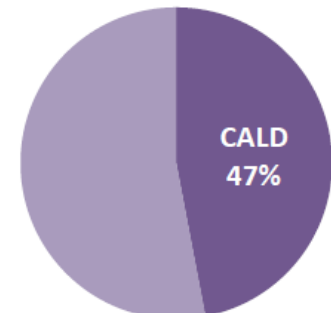
## Home At Last (HAL) Intakes - Total 1179



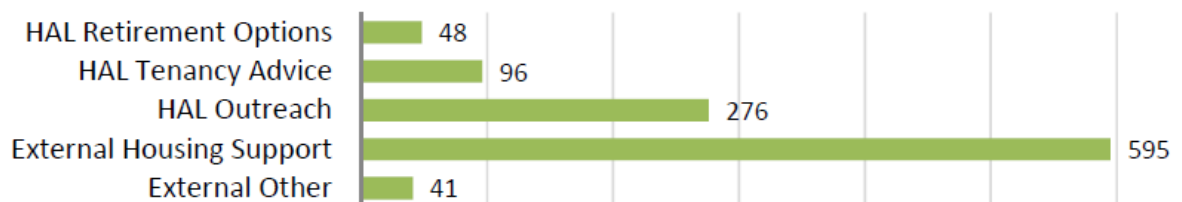
## Client Gender



## Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Clients



## Referrals by HAL intake

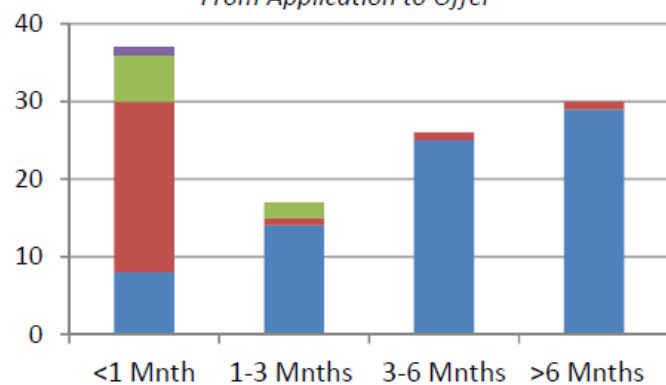


## Housing Outcomes



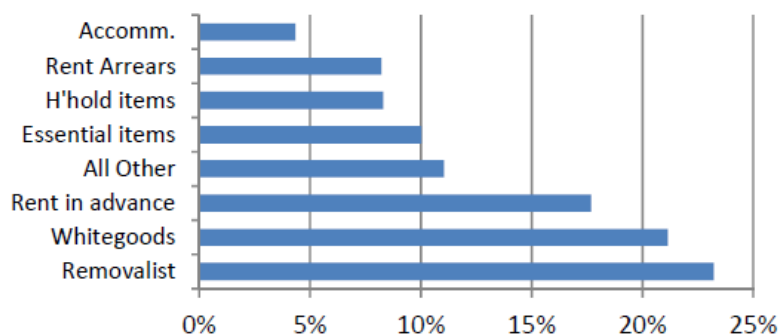
## Timeframe to rehouse

From Application to Offer



Public Housing Social Housing Independent Living Unit Other

## Brokerage



## Main reason clients presented to service

Inadequate or Inappropriate dwelling conditions 35%  
Housing crisis 30%  
Housing affordability stress 16%

## Home at Last: Housing Support

During the 2016-2017 financial year, we celebrated a significant housing support milestone in our Home at Last Service, the housing of our 500th client. To celebrate our housing success



stories we produced a special edition newsletter featuring the 500th person we housed, as well as stories from five others across the years. The newsletter titled Home & Housed provides a snapshot of our client support service and we recommend its reading to all (call 03 9654 7389 for a copy or visit our website [www.older tenants.org.au](http://www.older tenants.org.au)).

As members know, after successful evaluation of our Home At Last service over 2012-15, the project was granted ongoing funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as a homelessness intervention and prevention project.

*What homeless intervention and prevention means in practical terms for the people we see is the provision of housing options information that enables them to plan ahead thus preventing them falling into homelessness. For those people already in crisis, we provide them with housing support that secures them long-term housing. The support we provide not only ends a person's homelessness but also provides them a safe and secure future.*

Since 2012 we have worked with just over 4,876 people, of those, 74% were assisted by us and our external partner services, to find long-term, affordable, public or social housing. In our own outreach service we have successfully secured housing for some 588 people. With an emphasis on preventing homelessness, part of our work with all those we have housed is the implementation of a housing plan that ensures they are able to sustain their tenancy and not fall back into homelessness. Features of the plan are accessing housing that is no more than 30% of income in rent, housing that is suitably accessible and modified to allow ageing in place, and financial assistance to establish both their tenancy and home without going into debt.

Although the recording and quoting of our service numbers is a vital aspect of our work we must never lose sight of why we do the work we do. For us as housing support workers, the most rewarding thing about supporting people into housing is the emotional outcome achieved by finding someone a home, emotional not only for the person but also for us as workers, the joy and relief expressed by people when they finally secure a home is so precious.

*We all know how important home is to all of us and we recognise it as the pivotal thing that provides safety, security and wellbeing.*

Having a home is something everyone identifies with and aspires to obtain. It provides all of us with identity, self-esteem and importantly a space over which we have control of, many people tell us this is the most important factor in them securing a home, nothing like being able to shut your own front door on the world! In our work we are so fortunate to see the transformation of a building into a home, the emotional comfort people gain from being surrounded by their prized possessions can't ever be overstated, (even when we struggle as workers to co-ordinate moving



Henrietta is so relieved to have a place of her own after living with others for so long.

day!), we are also able to take pride in having assisted someone to gain confidence from having a place from which to venture into the world. Security of housing has a direct link to ease of movement outside the home and it is delightful to see many of our securely housed people engage in activities and services in their local area, who wouldn't want to be a housing worker given all of these rewards!

Planning and establishing a successful housing service model from scratch is no easy feat and a lot of thanks goes to all those who supported our vision and efforts, without your support many older people would have remained homeless or living in insecure and unsafe accommodation, well done and congratulations to everyone.

Special thanks goes to all of our funders, external service partners, HAAG members and workers, a special mention to Crystal for all of her data work and to our housing support workers who work tirelessly for all our clients.

## **Retirement Housing case study: Caravan park closures**

There has been a recent trend in caravan park closures, re-developments and change of use. For older residents this trend is causing them fear and concern for their housing futures.

One example is the Daylesford Holiday Park. There are currently 11 permanent residents who are all over 55, including one woman in her 90's who has lived in the park for over 30 years and five residents who moved in as recently as last year.

Notices to Vacate were issued to these residents by the park manager on 20th March 2017. The notices require residents to vacate their site by 23rd March 2018. The Daylesford Holiday Park is situated on Crown land and the Crown Land Policy states that there are to be no permanent residents living on crown land.

The residents have been told by the manager that the intention is to create a park that solely caters to tourists and so they are campaigning and lobbying to be allowed to remain in their homes until such time as they are no longer able to live there.

The manager has undertaken proper process under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA) so it makes it difficult for the residents to challenge and yet their homes are being threatened and finding alternative housing is difficult. They will also lose any money they may have invested in their homes because they are unable to sell their units.

HAAG is currently advocating for changes to the RTA so that residents in this type of situation may have the ability to seek compensation and support to relocate.



# TENANCY & RETIREMENT

HAAG's Consumer Affairs  
Victoria funded service

**IN 2016/17:**

**641**

hundreds of older people  
across Victoria received  
support from our services

## OLDER VICTORIANS



**HOURS**

**2600**

casework, outreach and  
advocacy including  
supporting residents  
during park evictions.



**69%**

## LACK INFORMATION

lack access to information,  
which is why our information  
and advocacy service is so  
important!



**CENTRELINK**

**95%**

people were on a  
Centrelink benefit,  
experiencing financial  
hardship



## OUR TENANCY ADVICE SERVICE HAS ENDED!

After nearly thirty years, we are no longer funded for  
tenancy advice. As of July 2017, there is no specialist  
tenancy advice service for older Victorians.

## The end of an era

HAAG was funded by Consumer  
Affairs Victoria (CAV) to provide a  
tenancy advice service for 29 years.

With changes to the way that CAV  
funds their state-wide tenancy  
advice program, HAAG was no  
longer funded to provide specialist  
tenancy advice as of 30 June.

Instead, we will have to refer older  
people with tenancy problems to  
their local Tenancy Advice Service.

Although we are thrilled with our  
expanded retirement housing  
service funding, we are  
disappointed to lose our vital  
tenancy advice service.

The advantage of HAAG having its  
own tenancy worker was that it not  
only helped people with their  
eviction notices and repairs, it  
allowed them to access the Home  
at Last service for more suitable  
long-term housing at the same  
time. This meant that people could  
get help before they were evicted,  
and having the two services  
working together under the one  
roof is part of what makes our  
service so special.

We would like to pay special tribute  
to our tenancy workers over the  
years – Jeff Fiedler, Marc Westley  
and Shane McGrath – who have  
provided specialist tenancy advice  
for older people for many years.

We look forward to continuing to  
work with Consumer Affairs  
Victoria to ensure the rights of older  
tenants are not forgotten.

# many thanks

Thanks to our major funders, the Victorian Government and the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

Thanks to the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation for their support of the Independent Living Unit research and, via Youth in Philanthropy, the "Providing the Basics" funding. Thanks to Wicking Trust for funding the "Ageing on the Edge" national project. Thanks also to Streetsmart for supporting our clients again this year.

Thanks to our Committee of Management who have guided and provided strategic direction and governance to the organisation. Thanks to the staff who continue show dedication and passion for supporting the needs of older clients.

Thanks to our partner organisations, in particular the University of Adelaide Centre for Housing and Urban Research, Consumer Action Law Centre, Council on the Ageing Victoria, Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria and the Centre for Ethnicity and Health.

Special thanks to our amazing working groups who continue to develop targeted campaigns in Independent Living Units and Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages. The dozens of members involved in these groups are 'lived' experts in their fields, and have been invaluable in the multitude of reviews and inquiries this year.

A very special thank you to all of our members who volunteer their time to support HAAG, be it with a mail out, a brochure drop or to lend their professional services - and a special mention to Guruswamy Perumal for beautifully photographing all of HAAGs events again this year.

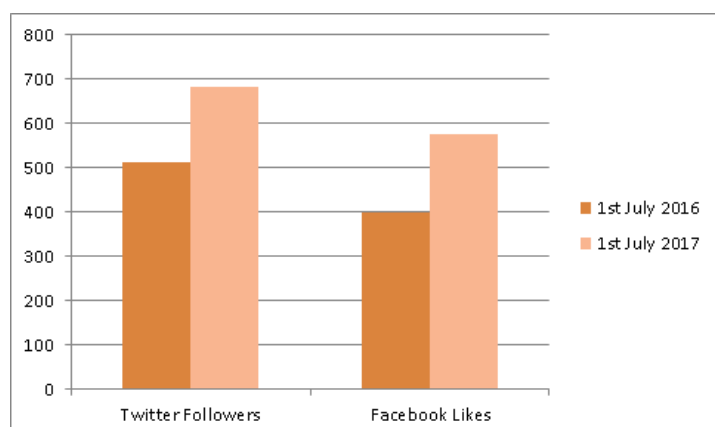


Last financial year (15-16) the HAAG Communications Working Group created HAAG's communications strategy. This year (16-17) a group of HAAG workers were seconded on to the Communications Team, to assist in the day to day tasks associated with achieving the aims of the communications strategy.

## Increasing our digital reach

HAAG has begun collecting and analyzing data on the use of our website and social media platforms, in order to improve our efforts using the web for advocacy as well as outreach. Through the use of Google Analytics, we've been able to drill down and look at how visitors are finding their way through the website. Noticing some unusual trends, we rearranged links on our homepage, and greatly improved our website navigation on smartphones.

To complement our Newsletter and Social Media outreach, we've also begun sending out an email bulletin as another way to keep in touch with our members and supporters. So far we've had a really great level of engagement, with 587 subscribers opening 40% of our emails, which is really high compared to most not for profit sector email lists.



We found that visitors were more likely to return to the website multiple times, and spent 33% longer on the site in 2016-17 than during 2015-16. Over the year, our Facebook followers grew 29% to 554, and our Twitter followers grew 24% to 683.



@HousingfortheAgedActionGroup



@HAAGHomeAtLast

## Community and sector education

Our community education has had a focus on training for service providers this year. Our partnership with Centre for Ethnicity and Health saw the delivery of cultural awareness training for housing workers, and we delivered a number of training sessions on our Home at Last Service to other service providers. Several of these, in languages other than English.

We have expanded our information sessions to service providers to include housing trends for older people as well as service delivery, via our interagency protocol work, while continuing to run community education sessions to groups of older people. We hope to develop a peer education program in the coming year to contribute to this work.

## Presentations & Training

Presentations given on on Housing Policy and trends:

3 / 65 people

Training provided to other agencies on service delivery:

8 / 148 people

Presentations given on the service available at HAAG-

To Community Groups:

3 / 85 people

To Agencies:

5 / 59 people

At Forums

1 / 40 people

At Expos:

2/ 50 people



Article in the Senior 7th Nov 2016

2016-17

## MEDIA RELATIONS

8

### PRESS RELEASES SENT

We kept the media informed of our reports & projects, changes to housing policy, retirement sector reform, and caravan park closures

6

### TV APPEARANCES

ABC News, Channel 7 News (x2), Channel 10 News, A Current Affair, The Project

22

### NEWS ARTICLES

The Senior (x6), The Age (x5), The Courier (x3), Regional papers (x2), Australian Womens Weekly (x1), The Saturday Paper (x1), The Leader (x1), Speciality publications (x3)

9

### RADIO SHOWS

774 AM (x3), ABC News (x1), ABC Regional (x1), Radio National (x1), SBS Philipino (x1), Senior Radio (x1), 702 AM (x1)

24

### REGULAR RADIO PROGRAMS

774 AM Raise the Roof (monthly)  
774 AM City Limits (monthly)



Fairfax investigation into AVEO Retirement Villages

Older renters from culturally diverse backgrounds are facing discrimination and hardship in the private rental market. A forum is being held on the issue, but community support is also vital, writes **Kimberley Seedy**

## Renting risk for elderly

OLDER Knox renters from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are being discriminated against and are at significant risk of becoming homeless. That's the warning from Housing for the Aged Action Group manager April Bragg, whose group is joining forces with Villa Maria Catholic Housing and Knox Council to host a forum to help people from different ethnic backgrounds find secure, affordable housing. Knox residents hail from more than 110 different countries, with the 2011 Census showing 21 per cent (more than 41,000 people) were born overseas. Twenty per cent more



Angela Ng takes a group of clients through a session of chair-based exercises.

## Sessions for diverse seniors a hit

A VICTORIAN first multi-cultural wellness centre, the seniors' culture. It provides social groups, had a waiting list for clients. The centre is for people

Article in Knox Leader 5th April 2016



Article in The Senior 26th Oct 2016



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

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