



Kris



**HOUSING
FOR THE
AGED
ACTION
GROUP**

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2019-
2020**



Liz



Phyll



Anne Maher



Ran



Victoria's iPad



CHAIRPERSONS REPORT



This annual report is chock full of HAAG activities throughout a year of unusual happenings—beginning in the end days of the 2019 Annual General Meeting (AGM). You may remember that day as one of the worst sudden wild weather of wind and rain thundering down on us. Members stranded in trains caught up in holding patterns along the way. The guest speaker never arrived but we coped and got through that AGM.

We'd have been wrong to think nothing would top all the disturbances of that day - and then along came Covid-19, a virus to threaten everyone, especially aged citizens.

Ross House closed and HAAG went digital. The HAAG workers have managed to plough through red tape with other organisations and are still finding housing for clients in need though not usually able to meet up face to face. It is mainly via the magic of modern technology like the internet or the telephone, often with the aid of helpful interpreters.

Online meetings have become the norm. The two HAAG management people, Fiona and Christine deserve special mention for their marvelous steering of all HAAG activities during the days of lockdown and ongoing HAAG advocacy often with politicians, plus publications and appearances to varied government inquiries and/or Commission into aged people's concerns.

You may read any of the depositions on the HAAG website presented during this year. I also

congratulate my fellow Committee of Management members and the many members of the different HAAG subcommittees, who are all volunteers but they have taken to Zoom meetings like veterans. The postal delivery disruptions has not been helpful, but handled.

HAAG is a well established member driven organisation and still the only one in Australia acting for aged people in need of suitable, secure and affordable housing. The importance of our 480 members is a major HAAG priority. HAAG needs all members to be ready to meet up again face to face when the rules allow and catch up on Zoom meantime. We are nothing without you all and we look forward to the day we can get together again.

Our strategic plan was endorsed by the Committee of Management in November 2019. For over a year we consulted with members and workers, to develop the plan, supported by consultants. We reviewed our achievements against the previous strategic plan, and looked at the context for our organization – increasing demand, more and more people coming to us in crisis, fewer housing options, as well as more opportunities for connecting with aged care, national advocacy and regional expansion.

We established four strategic pillars, which form the basis for the sections of this report:

- Service Delivery
- Advocacy and Campaigns
- Honouring our heritage
- Organisational Strength

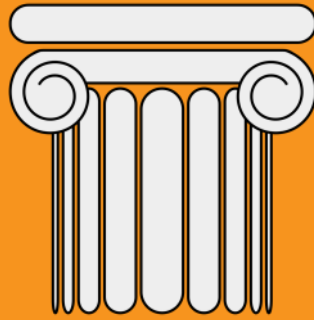
If you would like a copy of our strategic plan, please contact our office or look online at: oldertenants.org.au/strategicplan

This template guides HAAG activities in order to maintain our Vision, our Mission and our Values.

Always.

Stay safe and well, Phyll.

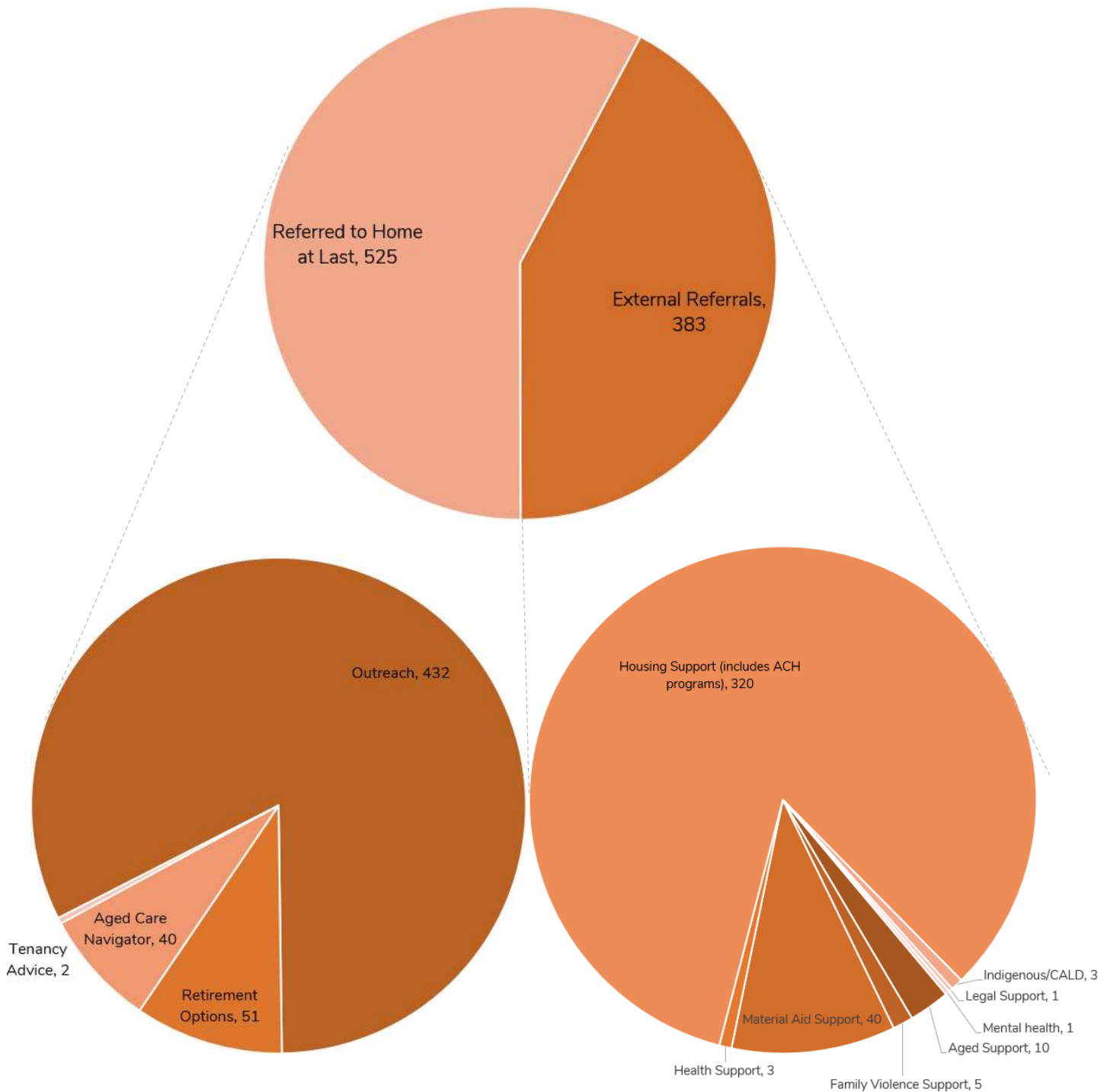
SERVICE DELIVERY



Changing lives -
enabling older people to make
positive life changes through
high quality service delivery



Where are clients referred when they call Home at Last?



Our housing support service has successfully continued to provide housing assistance and support throughout 2019-20, despite the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic. Due to the dedication and hard work of the housing support and intake & referral teams 160 clients were assisted into long term, affordable, secure housing during 2019-20 financial year. Almost half of these clients were housed in the January to June period despite the lockdown and restrictions.

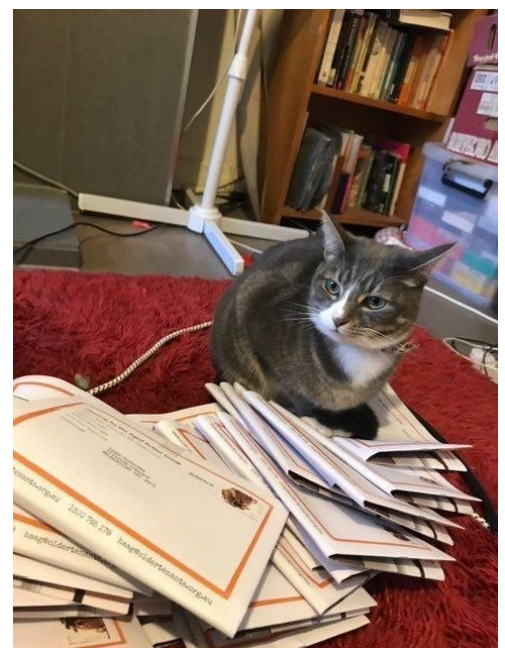
From the last week in March HAAG staff began working from home. This created some initial challenges with arranging for our 1300 phone number to be diverted to mobile numbers supplied to the intake team. However, it did not take long to sort out the glitches and the intake and referral service has continued as usual with only the drop-in service being unavailable.

From April through to June, there has been some reduction in the number of people contacting the service with indications that, due to the lockdown and restrictions put in place, that older people, even if in at risk housing situations, have held off seeking assistance. While it is difficult to gain a clear picture of the how the pandemic has impacted on people at risk of homelessness, based on what clients contacting the service have said, this appears to be a major contributing factor. The positive side to this has been that our allocations list for people waiting for a housing support worker halved during this time, from over 100 people in January 2020, to hovering in the 40s by June 2020 – this has meant that the wait time for support has greatly reduced.

The lockdown and restrictions presented some considerable extra challenges for the housing support outreach team. Outreach workers ceased doing face to face contact with clients including home visits and transporting clients to appointments. New case management assessments have been undertaken by phone. The team developed processes to minimise face to face contact for outreach workers to continue to assist clients with submitting housing applications, responding to property offers and to move into housing. PPE and sanitiser was hastily sourced for workers, and safety check protocols implemented. DHHS Housing eased requirements for signing of documents and housing area offices and community housing providers developed processes to enable clients to view properties and proceed with sign-ups with minimal contact. This was all achieved through working together as a team, using initiative, ingenuity and through cooperative working relationships with housing workers in DHHS area housing offices, community housing providers and ILU providers.

Given the very challenging circumstances, the team has done an excellent job in finding ways to continue to provide the same pre-pandemic level of high-quality service delivery. The whole team continued to work very hard to ensure that wherever possible, clients have been provided with, or linked to assistance, as soon as possible. The outreach team, with some keen networking and advocacy skills, continue to secure great housing outcomes for clients, primarily in public and community housing and also with Independent Living Unit providers.

And we have all mastered the art of holding team meetings via zoom regardless of bad hair days and complete with entertaining contributions from children, cats, dogs and a bird!





Ali was referred to Home at Last by the Ascot Vale Housing Office, for an urgent assessment in late December 2019. He was approved for 'Homeless with Support' in January 2020, before the outbreak of COVID-19.

Ali had fled Somalia as a refugee and came to Australia in May 2015. Having survived the civil war, he was left with a severe disability due to being shot in his leg. He ambulates with a walking stick therefore needed a ground floor property or one with lift access.

On arrival, Ali had lived with his son and family in South Australia.

He had recently come to Melbourne there was over-crowding in his son's house and growing extended family tensions. Since moving to Melbourne, he had been couch-surfing with friends. However, due to COVID-19, his friends were no longer willing to offer him to couch surf in their houses. Ali therefore had nowhere to live. We had approached every community housing provider but because Ali was on a Job Seeker payment, no housing provider would consider him.

We approached Moonee Valley Council as they have nomination rights for some properties in Moonee Ponds. We strongly advocated for Ali to be nominated for one of their vacant properties as soon as possible due to the seriousness of COVID-19 and its' possible health risks to Ali. They immediately nominated Ali for a bed sit property. Unfortunately, Ascot Vale Housing Service declined this nomination, as Ali was not 55 years old yet.

A day before the Stage Three restrictions, we wrote to Ascot Vale Housing Service to ask that they reconsider. Ali would turn 55 in June, which was only couple of months away. He desperately needed an appropriate living environment. His housing situation was causing him severe anxiety and stress, especially during this health pandemic as he feared of becoming ill.

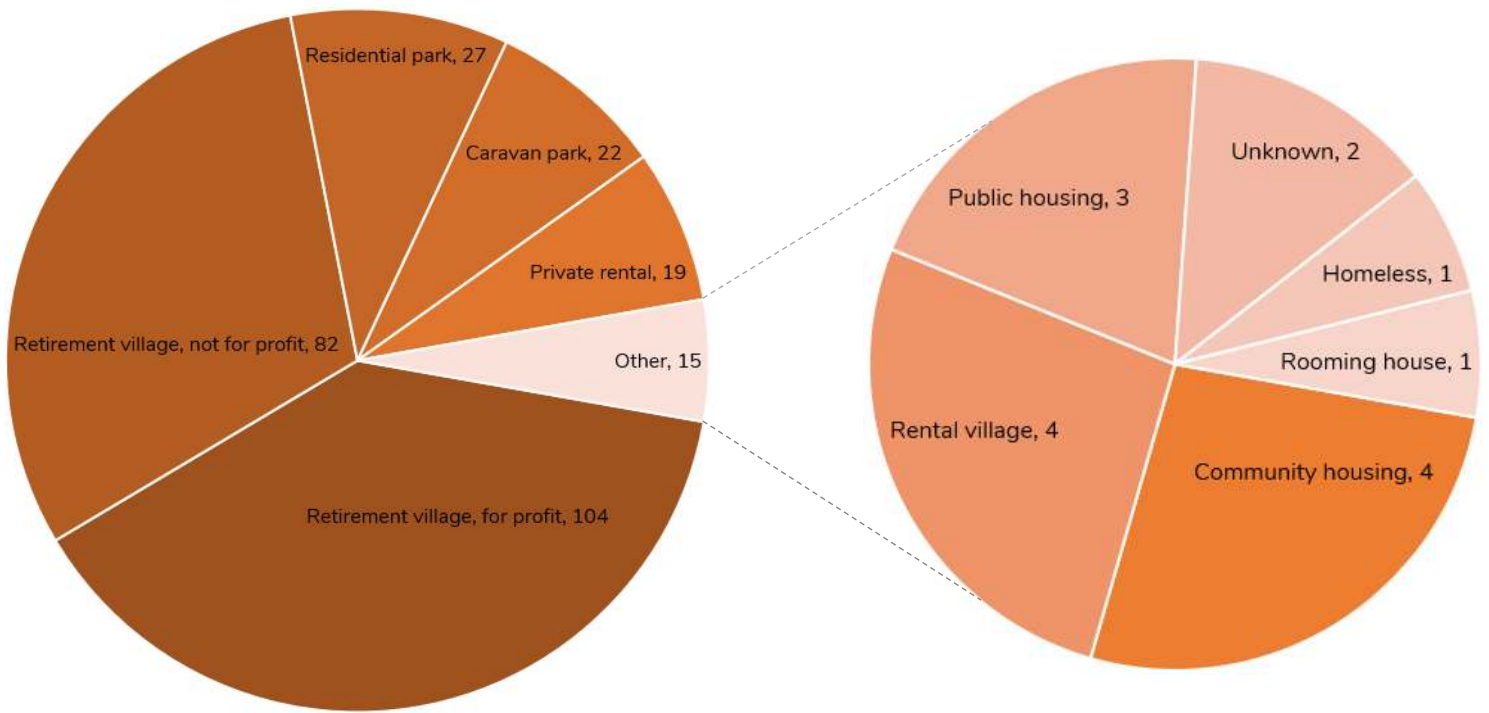
Our outreach worker, Melis Cevik assured Ascot Vale Housing Service that he would turn out to be one of their best tenants. She urged them to re-consider their decision and offer Ali one of their available bedsits as soon as they could. We had very little time left before the full lock down would occur in Melbourne.

The next day, we received a phone call informing us that they did re-consider their decision and decided to offer Ali a public housing property! We completed all the paperwork on the same day before the lock down restrictions began.

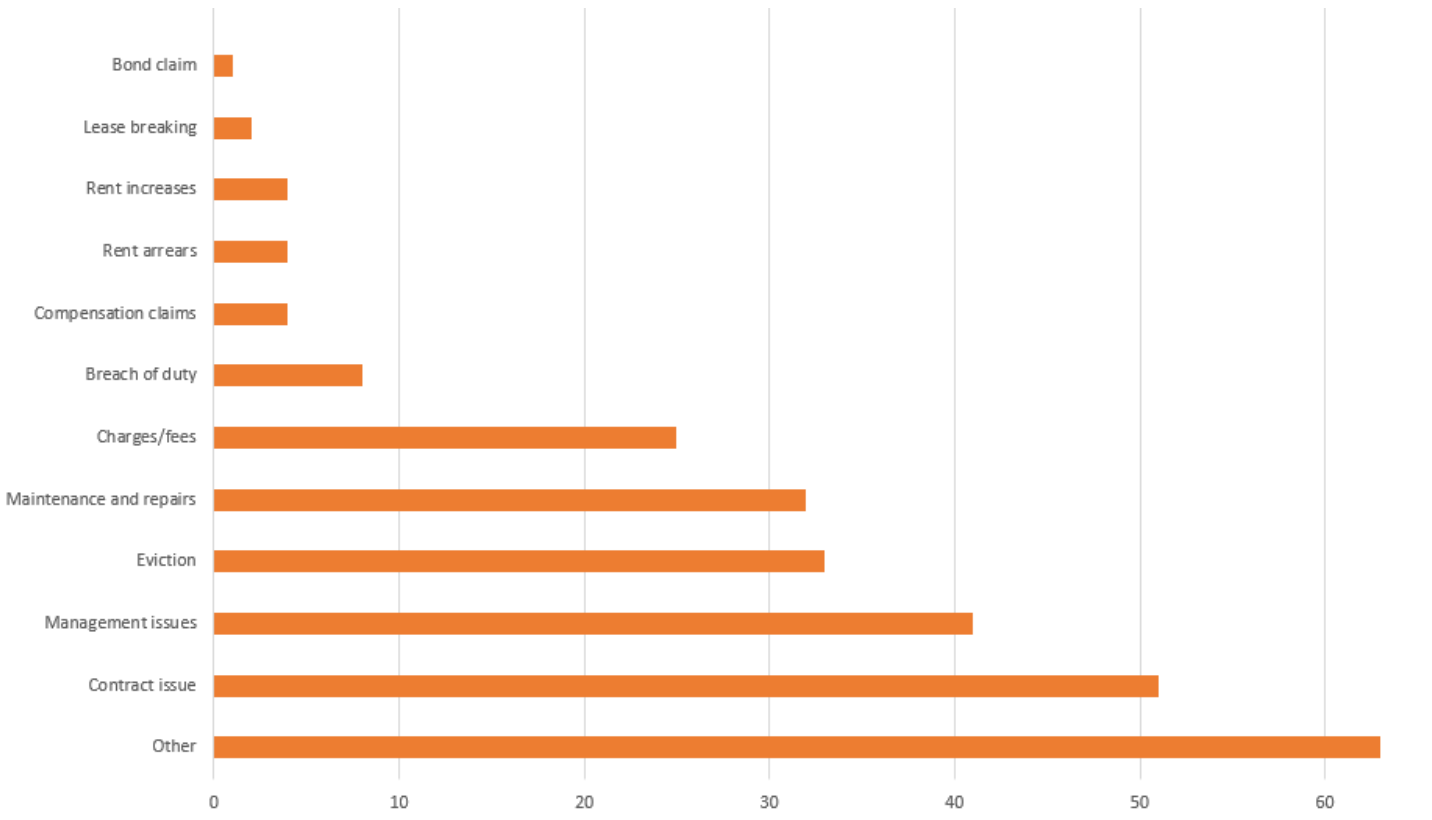
Ali was the last client Melis worked with on a face-to-face basis due to COVID-19 pandemic. She has been continuing to assist Ali with his needs over the phone. Every time they talk on the phone, he finishes with a little prayer from the Quran, wishing us the best. He said:

"I am very thankful sister that I was housed before the Ramadan began on 23 April, and at the end of Ramadan with Eid-al-Fitr celebration, I may not have many people visiting me due to the pandemic, but I will have safe, secure and affordable housing".

Who does our Retirement Housing Advice Service help?

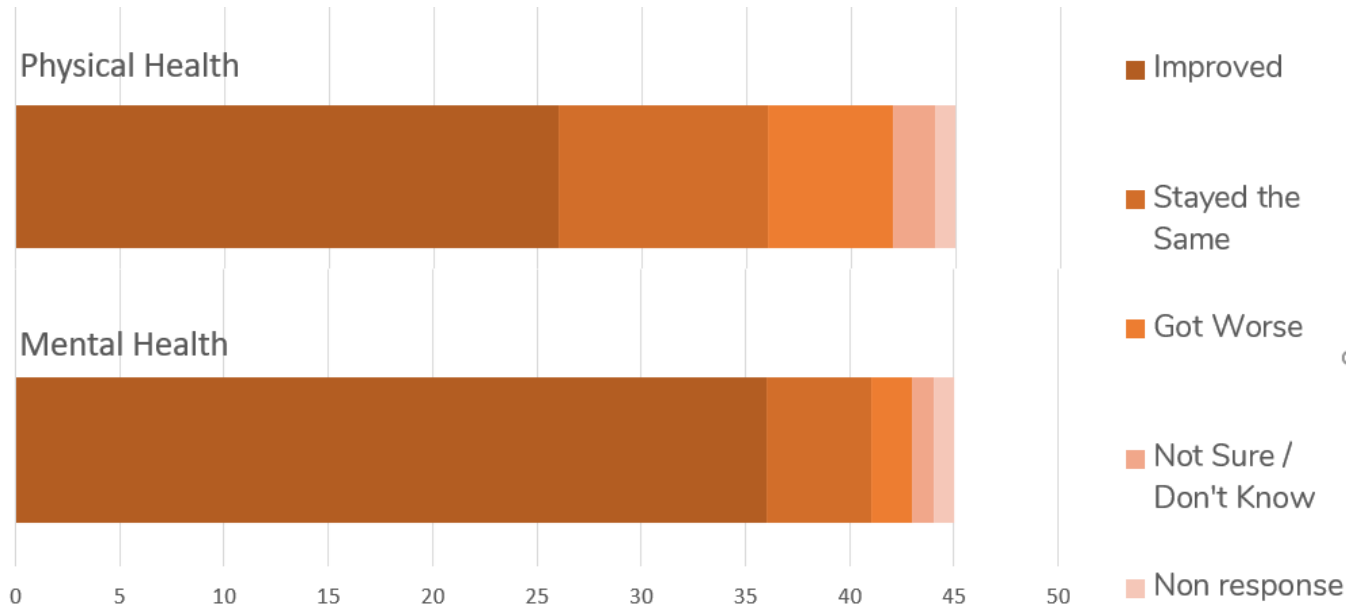


What issues do they have when they come to us?

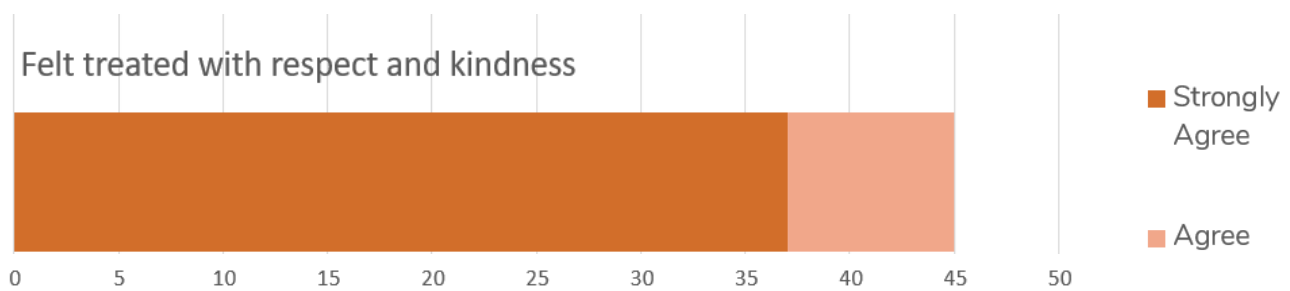


In September and October 2020, HAAG conducted an over the phone client feedback survey with the support of a student on placement from RMIT University. We heard from 45 people who had been assisted by the service into housing in the 2019-2020 financial year.

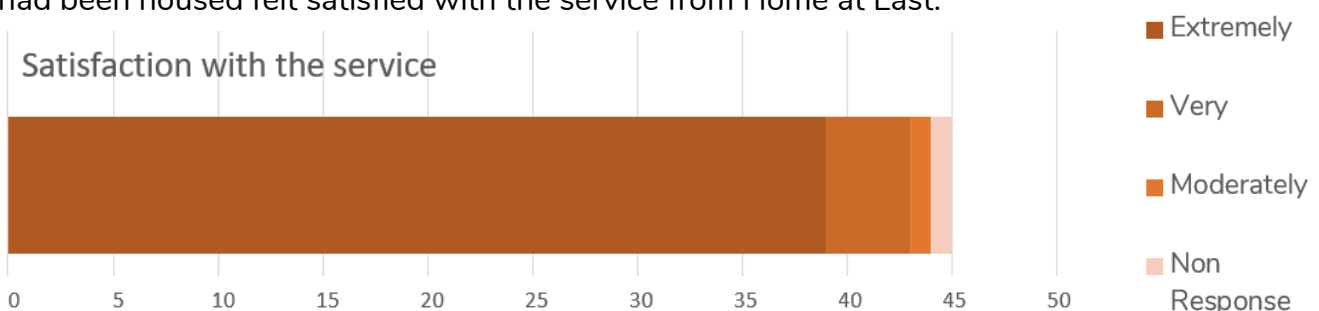
The results from the survey highlighted the positive effects of securing stable, affordable housing on clients physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing.



Participants most frequently commented that staff were caring, respectful, helpful, empathetic and actively listened to their concerns.



Satisfaction with service provision indicators were high across the board, and everybody who had been housed felt satisfied with the service from Home at Last.



“The people are down to earth. Doesn't matter where you come from, staff were really supportive. Thank you so much”

“I think because the workers are so dedicated and do their utmost to get you appropriate housing. . . and almost go beyond to find housing for people. They are very democratic and don't treat you like a charity case. They are such strong advocates”

“I was in great need of a house. I was homeless and I was not comfortable to live without a house. My daughter has a very small house, and it was very uncomfortable. I am very comfortable now”

“The staff explained to me in a very simple way, so I understood. The support workers made it easy.

I was suicidal. I feel so great now that I have a place to live, it's not a house, it's a home now. I'm over the moon now. I keep my mind engaged. I now do a lot of reading, I've joined the library. . . I've joined Men's Shed. I feel so good I have something to do. The organisation showed me there was light at the end of the tunnel. They took me out of the darkness.”

Our first point of call for most clients is our intake phone line, 1300 765 178. Some clients may also get in touch with our intake team via our standard office number, 9654 7381, option 1.

On average the 1300 number:

Receives



calls per working day

Talks for



minutes on average

Talks for up to



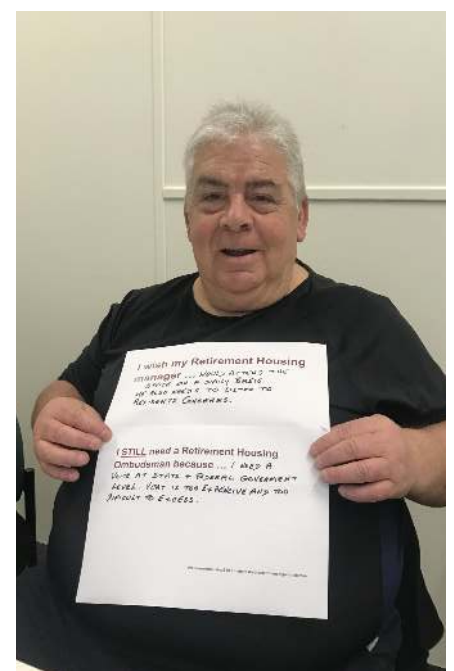
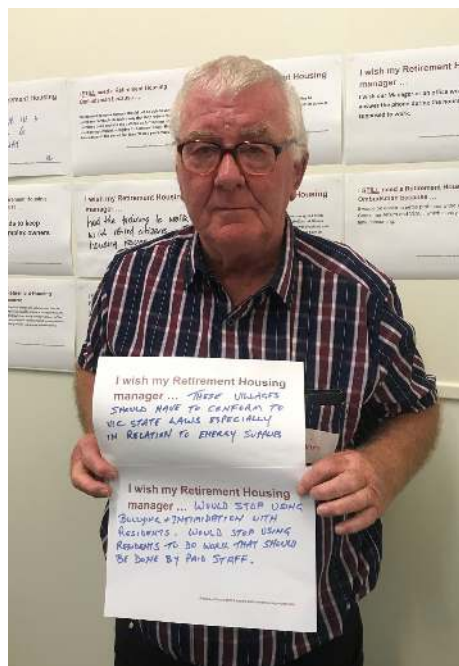
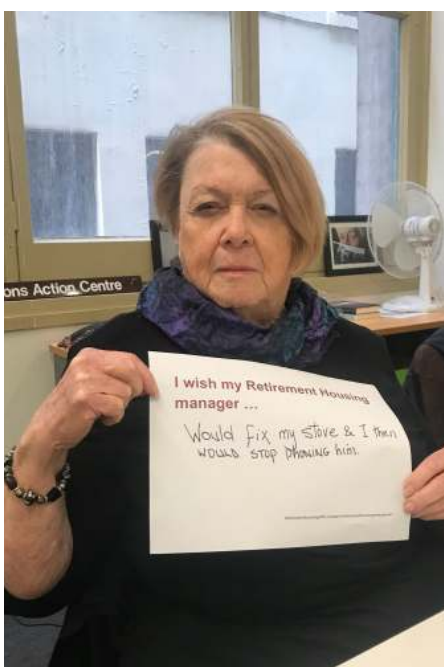
minutes to each client

Park owner turned prisoner

This year, many of our Retirement Housing Advice Service’s most notable cases involved fallout from a New Years’ Eve brawl at a small regional caravan park. The owner had attacked one of his employees, also a resident of the park, and ultimately hospitalised him before turning on another resident. The owner was ultimately sentenced to four years in prison on charges including assault and aggravated burglary. But before he went away, he settled grudges against residents he felt had sided against him—one who witnessed the assault, and that resident’s friends. His attempts to drive them out of the village included eviction notices, threats to their safety and property, disconnecting electricity, etc, etc. When they finally left, he retaliated against the witness with an incredibly exaggerated, vexatious and retaliatory compensation claim for over \$10,000. With HAAG’s help, all our clients escaped this volatile situation, with several receiving compensation from the park owner and none of them paying the owner’s outrageous claims.

Licensing Requirements for Park Owners

HAAG has long advocated a mandatory training and accreditation scheme for the managers of retirement housing. The cases above convinced us that it’s still vitally important to make sure the people running parks and villages are suitable and capable of doing so. A new priority for us has been considering a fit and proper person test for owners and managers – that is, banning people from running parks if they’ve been convicted of a serious offence or an offence against residents. (This would obviously mean the owner mentioned above could not return to his reign of terror.) We will keep you updated on this campaign as it develops.



HAAG began a service delivery trial called the ‘Aged Care Navigator’ trial in January 2019.

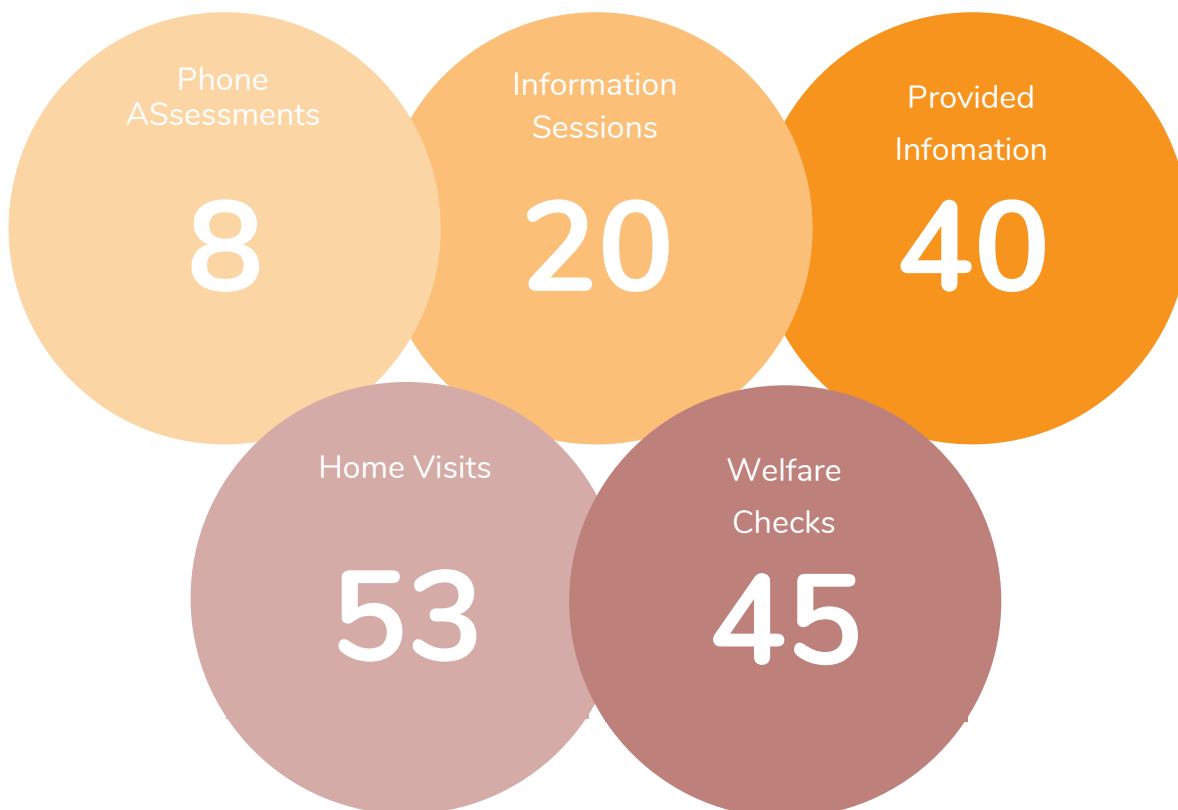
Many people who have been homeless or at risk of homelessness are forced to put their health and wellbeing last, due the ongoing stress of their housing situation. Many also believe they are unable to receive assistance in their home, if it is not stable and secure. The trial aims to support people facing barriers and vulnerabilities to access aged care services, including registering for My Aged Care and receiving information about services that are available, advocating for client needs and a small amount of case management.

Prior to COVID-19 there were three elements to our service:

- **Home Visits** by Bi-lingual Workers to people from their community/language group to help them to register for an aged care assessment.
- **A Drop in Service** available to any older person (not just those experiencing housing issues). Two office-based volunteers were available to explain the Aged Care system as well as provide assistance to register and interact with My Aged Care
- **Information sessions** run by bilingual workers for their community about how to access and what to expect from Aged Care. Through these information sessions older people could register for a follow up home visit with a Bi-lingual worker.

In March we restructured the program to accommodate the new restrictions and guidelines provided by the Department of Health. This meant going from a face-face service predominately led by volunteers to a remote service. The volunteers were incredibly resilient during this period and patient as we all adapted and retrained to make the changes. The elements of our service changed as follows

- **Phone assessment** by Bi-lingual Workers
- **Home Visits** were adapted to be provided over the phone
- **Welfare checks**, contacting previous clients to ensure they have received an aged care assessment and the services they require. This new addition to the program has ensured that client’s do not fall through the gap and are able to access the services they need.
- **Our website** now includes an enquiries page where people can make an enquiry about aged care and receive an email or phone call response depending on their preference.
- **Information sessions** information sessions have been adapted to limit physical contact and now are provided remotely either in the form of a mailout, radio show or over Zoom.



Asha is 70 years old and lives in public housing after being housed by HAAG. Asha is originally from Iraq and speaks Arabic. One of our Arabic speaking bi-lingual workers went out to see her.

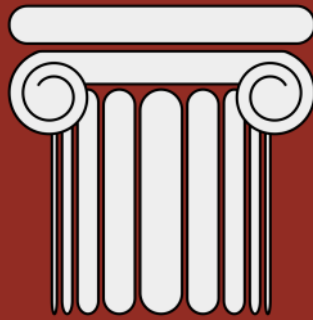
She was suffering from a number of chronic physical and mental health problems. She needed help with cleaning, meals and getting to health appointments as well as some advocacy in terms of her health needs. She also wanted to go to some groups for social support.

The bi-lingual worker came to Asha's house and spoke to her about what Aged Care services she could possibly get. She explained what My Aged Care is and that calling them to register will most likely mean an assessor will come out to see what Asha needs.

The visit went well and they were able to register for My Aged Care and an assessor was organised to come and assess Asha for a Home Care Package.

The home visitor also spoke to Asha about making a referral to an Access and Support worker who can help her along the way, whilst going through the process of getting aged care.

**ADVOCACY
&
CAMPAIGNS**



**changing the system -
seeking opportunities
to strive for systemic change**

Submissions

We use submissions to governments as opportunities to contribute to better policy and advocate for systemic change

- Australian Government Inquiry into Homelessness (two submissions, one on behalf of HAAG and a joint submission with our LGBTI partner organisations)
- Electricity Distribution Review Code (re: embedded networks in retirement housing)
- Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into homelessness
- Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety – two submissions, and evidence given in September 2019
- Submission to Newstart Inquiry – September 2019 – highlighting our issues with low rates of Newstart for older people.
- RTA omnibus legislation – our concerns with unintended consequences of COVID-related measures for older renters
- Regulatory Impact Statement for the proposed Residential Tenancies Regulations 2020
- Retirement Villages Act Review issues paper – two submissions, one on behalf of HAAG, and the other a joint submission with Consumer Action Law Centre
- The Ageing on the Edge NSW Forum made a Pre-Budget Submission for the 2020/21 budget asking for housing justice for older people in NSW (December 2019)
- Ministerial Briefing for Urgent Measures to protect older people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness from COVID-19 (April 2020)
- Senior's Housing Gateway proposal was submitted to Federal Ministers for Housing, Homelessness and Social Services in December 2019 and an updated summary proposal in May 2020

Meetings with Decision Makers

We use opportunities to meet with politicians to focus them to make decisions that benefit older renters

- Fiona and Kobi met with Richard Wynne MP, Minister for housing and planning, in April to discuss housing and older people
- LGBTI Whole of Government Strategy consultation – June 2020 – where we raised issues of older LGBTI people at risk of homelessness

COVID-related advocacy

HAAG has been fairly critical of the government's emergency relief for renters in the Covid-19 pandemic, which we think do not do enough for older renters. For example, measures to protect renters who could no longer afford their rent due to the pandemic excluded retirement village residents, as well as the many pensioners whose incomes remained the same but still faced severe rental stress in the private rental market. As much as we feel the reforms didn't go far enough, we are grateful that the government offered some increased protections for renters during this crisis.

- In early May, we provided information for renters about COVID and their rights, including rights in residential parks and caravan parks
- In May, we released a document: Older people and Housing during the pandemic, which collated some of our client stories, data and information from members as well as some policy recommendations
- In early June, we wrote to Consumer Affairs Victoria regarding what appeared to be unintended consequences of the Omnibus legislation and how it may impact on park closures
- In June we released a Policy Note: COVID19 and older people in housing stress. This collated the survey results from our COVID survey of members along with our client data and case studies. It was sent to politicians and resulted in a number of meetings.

External advocacy

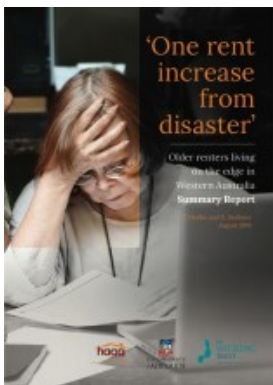
We represented the needs and perspectives of older people at risk of homelessness in the following networks and forums, both state and nationally:

- Aged Care Sector Diversity sub-Group, lead by the Commonwealth Department of Health
- Elder Abuse Round table, lead by Seniors Rights Victoria
- Specialist Homelessness Services Executive Advisory Group, lead by Council to Homeless Persons
- Ageing on the Edge NSW forum, jointly led by HAAG, Uniting NSW
- Housing Older Women movement, lead by Queensland Shelter
- Residential Tenancies Stakeholder Reference group, lead by the Residential Tenancies Commissioner
- Retirement Villages Act Stakeholder reference group, lead by Consumer Affairs Victoria

The Ageing on the Edge project is in its final year of funding by the Wicking Trust. With Wicking's support over the last five years, we have:

- grown awareness of the issue of older people and homelessness, such that there is broader community awareness now than there was 5 years ago;
- built the evidence base – working with Dr Debbie Faulkner, now at the University of South Australia, we have produced research on homelessness trends for older people and the service system in each State and Territory;
- established networks of older people with lived experience and coalitions of service providers and other stakeholders around the country; and,
- we've established HAAG as the go-to organisation on older people and homelessness in Australia.

This year we worked with Social Ventures Australia to document the Home at Last model. We identified core and ancillary services and the enablers that need to be in place to support effective service delivery. We have since done a lot of work with our Committee of Management, staff and external stakeholders to reach a shared view about our how we can replicate Home at Last across the country. We propose working with partner organisations to design and implement services that are embedded in local systems and are responsive to local contexts. We know what works in delivering the Home at Last service and will share this knowledge by providing backbone support to help set up similar services.



In September 2019, Simone McGurk, Minister for Community Services of the Western Australian Government launched our report, "One Rent Increase from Disaster" - *Older renters living on the edge in Western Australia*. The report identifies people aged 64-75 experiencing the biggest jump in homelessness of any aged group in Western Australia. The Ageing on the Edge working group in Western Australia has since been advocating for investment in social housing and a specialised housing information and support service for older people at risk of homelessness.

Our Queensland report, '*I Just want secure, safe housing*' – *Older people at risk of homelessness in Queensland*, was launched online in March 2020 at the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, there was not the same opportunity to draw attention to the issue of older people and homelessness in Queensland. Nonetheless, we have actively engaged with the Queensland Shelter auspiced Housing Older Women movement, which is advocating for investment in a specialised housing information and support service based on the Home at Last model. There is no equivalent service in Queensland.



In South Australia, we joined forces with a local service provider to tender for a pilot project under the SA government Homelessness Prevention Fund. We are yet to hear the outcome of the tender process.

In New South Wales, Uniting NSW/ACT took over the auspicing of the Ageing on the Edge Forum, which comprises over 20 organisations. At a workshop in November 2019, members of the NSW Forum agreed on four priorities to lead, support and influence over the next few years. Specifically, the Forum is advocating for the establishment of a housing information and support service in NSW and lowering of the age eligibility for priority social housing. An advocacy plan has been developed, members of the Forum have engaged with NSW government representatives and submissions have been made on the NSW budget and COVID-19 response.

In December 2019, the Aged Care Sector Committee endorsed the Homelessness Action Plan, specifically the 'actions to support older people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness' guides for providers and consumers, developed by HAAG, Dr Sandra South of AAG and others.

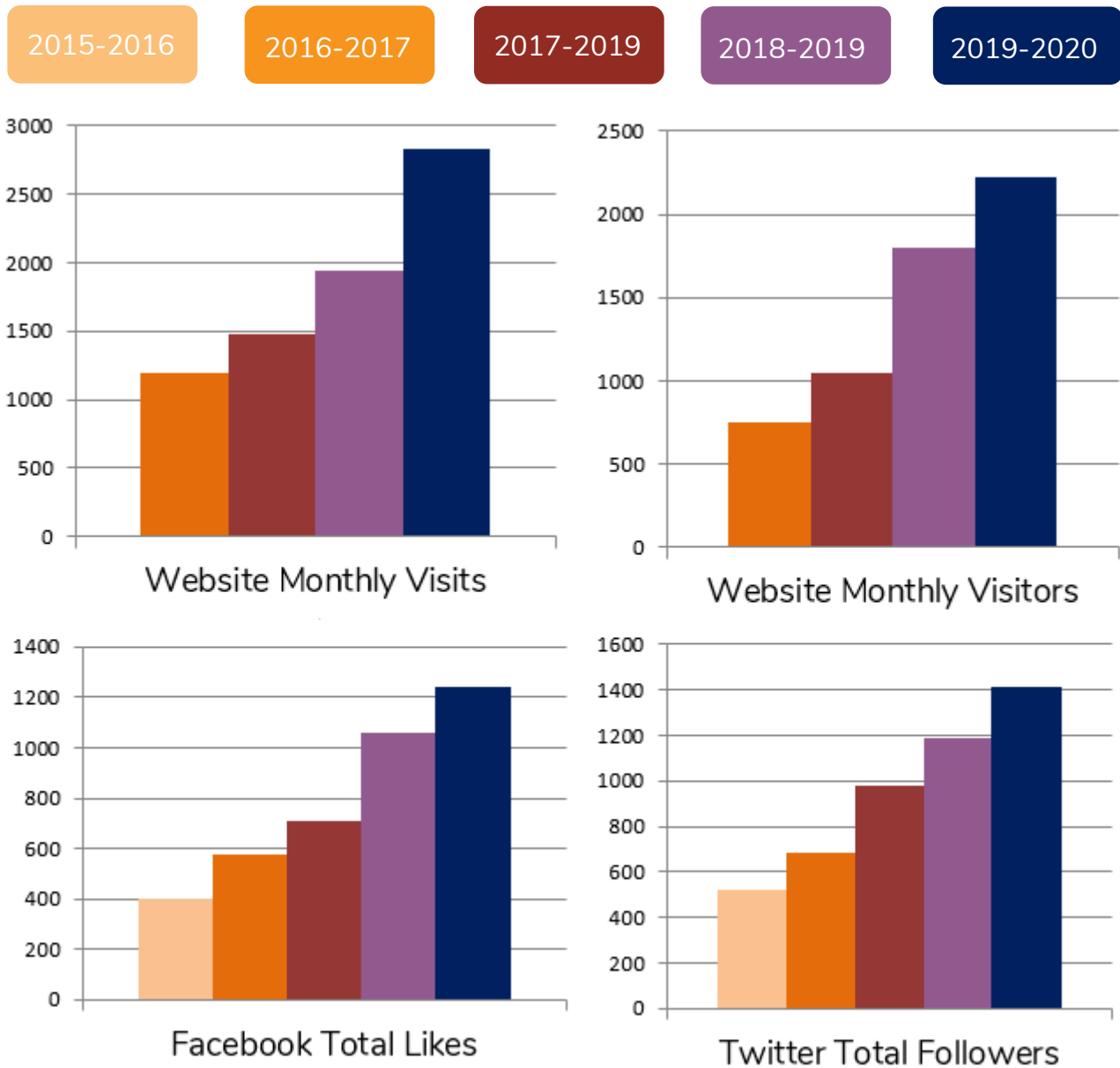
The National Alliances for Senior's Housing (NASH) continues to be convened by Leonie Bessant. We have updated the NASH terms of reference to align with HAAG's other working groups.



NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum, November workshop

Increasing our digital reach

Our online platforms help grow our campaigns and let people know about our services. Where in 2018-19 we had a big increase in unique visitors to our website, in 2019-20 we had a greater increase in return visits—indicative of people increasingly using the website resources on a more regular basis. We have also increased our use of online databases for organisation of events, membership details, volunteering and feedback



oldertenants.org.au



HousingfortheAged
ActionGroup



@HAAGHomeAtLast



3CR 855 AM

Every second Wednesday 5:30pm to 6:00pm

oldertenants.org.au/podcasts

HAAG in the News

HAAG featured in the news 14 times this year, with an increasing focus on older women's homelessness in the news media in general.

THE STANDARD News LOGIN SUBSCRIBE

JUNE 19 2019 - 5:04 AM

A free online forum will be held to help prevent elder abuse

Clare Quirk Label News

f t e a A A

A FREE forum will be held in Warrimbool to help empower residents to recognise and understand elder abuse.



The World Today with Sally Sara NEWS



Image: ABC

One in seven homeless Australians are 55 years or older: report

By Thomas O'Leary on The World Today

1688.com.au 澳洲新闻网

澳洲老年人深陷租房危机! 单身老太太最有可能流落街头

发布日期: 2019-08-28 11:45:08 文章来源: 1688澳洲新闻网 责任编辑: Flora

7750 1条评论 分享到微信

据澳洲广播公司报道, 72岁的海伦 (Helen) 和80岁的丈夫彼得 (Peter) 过去7年一直在墨尔本郊租房居住。

他们曾经也有自己的房子, 但15年前, 他们为了在澳洲进行短途旅行而卖掉了房子, 夫妻俩将大部分款放到了退休金账户里, 但在2008年全球金融危机中失去了大部分。现在, 二人靠养老金过活。

海伦表示, 他们很幸运, 可以住在墨尔本Craigieburn的一栋私人租房里, 但是房租很昂贵, 他们现在很担心未来。

Ageing Agenda

HEALTH POLICY/ANALYSIS OPINION SUBSIDIES INVESTMENT FINANCING

Call to focus stimulus package on senior accommodation



House-sitting on the rise for older people in financial stress or on verge of homelessness

ABC South West WA | By Kate Doolan, Denise Salmer | Posted Sat 31 Aug 2018 at 8:00am



She and her husband became professional house-sitters after their home was repossessed by the bank. (ABC South West WA: Doolan)

Senior

Anglicare's 2020 Rental Affordability Snapshot paints grim picture

1 hour 0 min



17/08/2019 10:27 AM

ABC NEWS

Older female renters are the 'canary in the coal mine' for housing affordability

By business reporter Emily Steiner and Lucia Stein | Posted Wed 28 Aug 2018 at 4:33pm, updated Wed 28 Aug 2018 at 5:28am



starts at 60. travel at 60. insurance at 60. member centre. marketplace

Property

'Help! I'm a pensioner with no savings and I don't want to rent any more'

ABC News | 10/08/2018





The HAAG Peer Educators are a recently formed group of older women who live in social housing. They are all former clients of HAAG's Home at Last Service, who are volunteering in the community to raise awareness about the drivers of homelessness for older people and how to seek help.

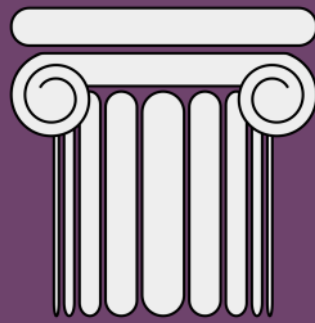
Since commencing, the group has received foundational training in public speaking and Peer Education. They have spoken at our members meetings, on the radio, in consultations, at public events and in the news/media. Two group members participated in research with Consumer Policy Research Centre. One group member has been selected to participate in the Residential Tenancies Commissioner's tenant's advisory group. One group member spoke to a group of young people about her experience of homelessness through the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation's Youth in Philanthropy program. They were also featured in the Federation of Community Legal Centres *Humans of Public Housing* project and took part in the Council For Homeless Persons consultations on changes to the homelessness sector. One group member is now representing the interests of older women who have experienced homelessness on our Committee of Management, enacting change within the organisation.

The group used their initiative to create a promotional strategy covering promotion of Home at Last to Drs surgeries, churches, Homelessness services, senior citizens clubs, neighbourhood centers, and local council aged care services. They sent letters, posters and brochures to over 200 medical centres across Victoria!

HAAG's Peer Educators are passionate about raising awareness of how homelessness can happen to anyone – all of them led conventional lives, had jobs and families and professions, and due to an unexpected incident or circumstance, suddenly found themselves homeless.

Unfortunately the Peer Education program was stalled in March 2020 due to COVID-19 but up until then, the Peer educators achieved so much and the group is ready for a revival in 2021!

HONOURING OUR HERITAGE



elevating the voices
of older people in all of our work



RAAG currently has three to seven members attending meetings, with a mix of people living in Independent Living Units and under Part 4A agreements, which allows for hearty discussions! Due to the significant travel time for many RAAG members, some RAAG meetings were deferred when HAAG meetings were planned in the same week, but now since

We started 2020 with strong momentum, with meetings that focused on planning for the year ahead to address issues including: the need to stop excessive fees, to reduce the complexity of contracts, to introduce mandatory training and accreditation for retirement housing operators and to establish a Retirement Housing Ombudsman.

Since June 2020, RAAG has been meeting monthly on Zoom. Many members have reported finding the online meetings efficient and easier to attend, especially for those who live a significant distance from the HAAG offices. RAAG is looking forward to going back to the office for those who prefer meetings in person but will retain the Zoom component allowing more people to attend regularly. This will also mean the travel time for many members will be reduced, allowing less meetings to be deferred.

The establishment of a Retirement Housing Ombudsman remains a key campaign focus of RAAG since the recommendation for “a new alternative for low cost, timely and binding resolution of disputes in the retirement housing sector” in the 2016 Inquiry into the Retirement Housing. The instatement of a Retirement Housing Ombudsman briefly gained momentum in the 2019 Victorian State Election, but to no avail.

Currently, RAAG are working on contributing to the Retirement Villages Act Review, which has made mention of creating a dispute resolution service or an industry specific ombudsman. If an Ombudsman was established in this review, it would only be appropriate for people covered by the Retirement Villages Act, excluding those residents covered by Part 4 and Part 4A under the Residential Tenancies Act. RAAG is campaigning to assert that a Retirement Housing Ombudsman is necessary and appropriate, and if one is to be established it should include all types of retirement housing.

HAAG's Community Engagement processes have evolved since intensive community engagement began in 2015. We now have a system of engagement with 4 levels:

Community Advocates

Trained, bilingual community leaders work as volunteers within their community to share information about HAAG and the Home at Last service. They can recognise when a person needs help with housing and, with their consent, make a referral to Home at Last via a single, nominated worker.

Cultural Diversity Reference Group

The Reference Group provides a forum for Community Advocates to share information about community needs, gaps in service provision and experiences using the Home at Last service. The group also discusses other HAAG services involving their communities such as the Aged Care Navigator program. HAAG staff can also share information about the ever-changing Victorian housing system, housing options and any new initiatives.

Volunteer Cultural Liaison Worker

This is a volunteer worker who can attend home visits with HAAG Housing Support workers, when the client is from his/her community (with the client's consent). This worker is more than an interpreter, they understand the cultural nuances and can explain processes in ways that make sense in the cultural context. This role is used in very small communities where language services are harder to access and communities where most older people are recent arrivals who require cultural support.

Community Education sessions

Pre-COVID, HAAG also held in-language community education sessions. These sessions offer tailored information which has been designed collaboratively with cultural reference groups from six communities. Case studies from the communities (which have been made into films) are used to emphasise some of the cultural aspects of being at risk of homelessness. For instance, in some communities the common experience of being at risk of homelessness may be living with family (adult children) in an elder abuse/ conflict situation, whereas for other communities, most older people who are at risk of homelessness are renting on their own.

Sameerah is 62 years old, and came to Australia as a refugee from Syria. She had been living with her mother and sister when she got in touch with Home at Last. We spoke to her with the help of an Assyrian interpreter.

Sameerah's mother cares for her sister who suffers from mental illness. They were living in a 2-bedroom property and Sameerah had to share a room with her older sister who often displayed challenging behaviour due to her mental health issue.

Sameerah was referred to HAAG/HAL for urgent housing assistance by HAAG Community Advocate, Vivian. She knew that Vivian volunteered for an organisation that helps with housing and asked her for assistance following a church service. Vivian passed her referral onto our intake worker.

At the time of the assessment by a HAL Outreach worker, Sameerah appeared to be quite distressed. The possibility of becoming homeless or continuing to live with her mother and sister in a challenging environment was very real. Our Cultural Liaison Volunteer was present at the assessment. She was able to explain, in Assyrian, the process of applying for housing, which is complex and bureaucratic.

A HAL outreach worker completed a 'Homeless with Support' housing application form with Sameerah which was approved in a very short period of time, following some active advocacy on her behalf. After the assessment it was not long before the HAL Outreach worker was notified of the availability of a community housing property. Sameerah was asked if she would consider living in the Northern region of Melbourne where the property was located which Sameerah was fortunately familiar with. The Outreach worker then nominated Sameerah for a community housing property which was a newly build apartment unit. Sameerah's nomination was successful and she received a property offer!

Sameerah's journey to being safely housed highlights the importance and critical benefit of working in a partnership with HAAGs CALD Community Liaison Volunteers. A volunteer tailored approach to the provision of information/referral and advocacy has enabled us to intervene and provide Sameerah with a coordinated and comprehensive housing referral service, overcoming the cultural and language barriers for her to be able to access affordable housing. Such work is not possible unless we maintain our close working relationships with Community Liaison Volunteers.



Many of the actions planned for NASH in 2020 were, brought to a screaming halt by COVID. However, we saw this as an opportunity to take stock and reorganize the group in preparation for the end of its current funding. We were really sad to see Jeff Fiedler leave as HAAG's National Development worker, but also we very much looked forward to working with Kobi Maglen and excited about what her fresh set of eyes would bring. Due to COVID the NASH organizing committee began meeting on Zoom, rather than over the phone. This has been a tremendous leap forward, with everyone putting in the effort familiarizing themselves with the technology.

A key new strategy for NASH has been to more closely align it with HAAG, becoming a working group of HAAG rather than purely a working group of The Ageing on the Edge project., with and updated Terms of Reference which will also become a template for other HAAG working groups.

As part of this change, the majority of NASH members have also joined HAAG, greatly increasing HAAG's membership outside of Victoria. The NASH newsletter now appears as a section in HAAG's Older Tenants Voice quarterly newsletter. We are working on collating the members stories that were presented in the NASH newsletter into a booklet for publication. Another step to bring NASH closer into the fold of HAAG is to having HAAG staff members presenting at NASH meetings. To further the project of congruence across HAAG's working groups, the coordinators of the groups now meet regularly to share our experiences and wisdom!

Throughout NASH has continued to collect stories from across Australia of older peoples' housing experiences. These stories are intended to form the basis of a book of older peoples voices from around the country, as well as case studies to inform the journal articles and other HAAG publications.

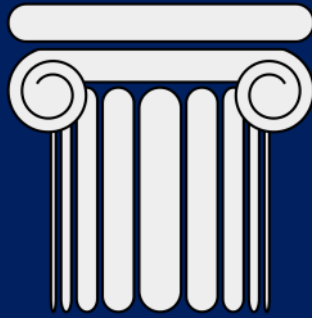
As part of our commitment to inclusive practice and diversity, HAAG has been working on an early intervention project to support older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people. The overall aim to use early intervention methods to improve the ability of older LGBTI people to navigate the housing and homelessness system to avoid housing crisis and access to appropriate housing options as they age.

Since the project's commencement, HAAG has been successful in building networks and connections with organisations and individuals the LGBTI sector both within Melbourne metro and rural Victoria. We developed a steering committee comprised of key organisations; Switchboard Victoria, Val's LGBTI Ageing and Aged care, Australian Association of Gerontology, Transgender Victoria and Thorne Harbour Health. The group met 5 times during the year, providing expertise on best practices in working with LGBTI communities, advice on community engagement strategies and research, and developed joint advocacy pieces, including submissions into the Victorian and Federal inquiries into homelessness.

As a key aim of the project is to understand and address the unique housing experiences of LGBTI older people. We have been conducting research into the current housing circumstances and concerns of LGBTI older people. We completed 228 surveys with the results indicating that older LGBTI people are not only at a greater risk of homelessness, they do not recognise that they are at risk and often do not know where to go for help and information .

HAAG has been proactive in building trust and rapport with the LGBTI community. This is especially important when engaging with older LGBTI people who are likely to have experienced discrimination from service providers in the past. We have been successful in spreading the message that HAAG is LGBTI inclusive and friendly. We have reached out to numerous LGBTI affiliated Facebook groups, newsletters, organisations and meetups within Melbourne metropolitan as well as regional Vic informing them of the project and the work and services provided by HAAG. We spoke at the regional LGBTI Unpacking Rainbow Tick network meeting in Bendigo in September, presented at the national LGBTI ageing and aged care conference in October 2019 and were interviewed for a Mardi Gras blog by Sheridan as part of their SleepSafe initiative.

ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH



Building on strong foundations;
continuing to consolidate
and strengthen HAAG
through organisational development

THE PEOPLE OF HAAG

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Maeve Browne-Cooper	General Member	Current
Victoria Gutsjahr	General Member	Current
Sue Marino	General Member	Current
Peter Sibly	Treasurer	Current
Kris Spark	General Member	Current
Phyll Williams	Chairperson	Current
Mary-Anne Wright	Vice Chairperson	Current
Pam Young	Secretary	Current
Pauline Cramer	General Member	Current, elected Nov 2019
Maree Norris	General Member	Retired, Nov 2019
Guruswamy Perumal	General Member	Retired, Nov 2019
Cassandra Williams	General Member	Retired, Nov 2019
Jodie Henry	General Member	Retired, Nov 2019

STAFF AND STUDENTS

Familiar Faces

Christopher Kadira
Christine Stapleton
Anne Maher
Darwin Cheng
Fiona Waters
Fiona York
Gemma White
Leonie Bessant
Libby Heath
Maria Cozzi
Melis Cevik
Naomi Gebert
Paola Posso

Reuben Endean
Shane McGrath
Joanne Maguire
Nese Duran
Susan McQueen
Rebecca Walton

Welcome on Board

Dimitra Lagoudaki
Claire Hurren
Kobi Maglen

Farewells

Emily Connolly
Jeff Fiedler
Sotiria Nika

Students

Nam Nguyen
Chelsea Barker

479 + 979

HAAG members

Clients in contact



Housing for the Aged Action Group Inc

ABN: 80 348 538 001

Statement of Income and Expenditure and Other Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2019

	2020	2019
	\$	
Income	Income	Income
Revenue	2,338,553	2,448,852
Expenses	Expenses	Expenses
Employee benefits expense	1,628,742	1,600,745
Depreciation and amortisation expense	41,118	24,330
Client Brokerage	221,638	279,520
Rent & Storage	76,838	63,005
Office expenses	76,182	70,748
Motor Vehicle Expenses	38,421	46,538
Accounting & Consultancy fees	18,571	68,601
Audit Expenses	4,200	4,000
Interest Expense	3,501	4,433
Travel and Accommodation	32,270	63,914
Training & Development	4,237	20,266
Volunteer & Student Expenses	17,849	10,624
Meeting expenses	12,956	13,918
Research Project Expenses	83,474	-
Other expenses	12,298	23,846
Total Expenses	2,272,295	2,294,488
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	66,258	154,364
Other Comprehensive Income	-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	66,258	154,364

The Committee of Management is pleased to report to its members on the financial outcome of the 2019-2020 financial year.

This year we have made a surplus of \$66,000 – funds that will further secure our financial viability in the years ahead. Along with this surplus, we have managed to set aside \$108,000 of unspent Wicking Trust project funds, to be carried forward into the 2020-2021 financial year. This capacity to hold over income received in 2019-2020 has been made possible by a very welcome recent change in accounting standards which will allow us to better track our project income against expenditure.

We received \$2,338,553 in revenue this financial year. A substantial part of our surplus income was due mostly to the receipt of a \$50,000 cashflow boost from the Australian Taxation Office to support us through the pandemic. HAAG successfully partnered with or received grants from the following organisations:



Ageing on the Edge Project

STREETSMART

ACTION AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

LGBTI Elders Housing project



Aged Care Service Navigator project



Capacity Building and Participation



Client storage & brokerage

Integral to the financial stability of HAAG is the recurrent funding provided by the State Departments of Health and Human Services, Consumer Affairs Vic and the Federal Department of Health and Ageing. We wish to thank our government partners for their ongoing support.

HAAG received about \$54,500 in donations in the 2019-2020 financial year. Our sincere thanks go to the following organisations for their generous support for our organisation:

- The Trustees of the Ducas Paul Foundation – \$50,000 (the second year in a row!) – Home at Last brokerage support
- COTA and SRV staff - funds given to us in lieu of their Kris Kringle - Home at Last brokerage support
- Staff at the Northern Victoria Zone of the Australian Government Department of Human Services (funds raised by a casual clothes day at Centrelink offices) - Home at Last brokerage support

Most importantly, a special thank-you to our members for providing us with financial support throughout the year; your contributions are gratefully received:

At year end, our increase of \$66,000 in retained earnings puts HAAG's total equity at \$682,650.00.

The Committee of Management considers HAAG to be in a strong financial position to continue with our mission - that of engaging and working with older people through community activism, services & advocacy to achieve social change and housing justice.

I would like to acknowledge the fantastic work undertaken by Libby Heath in maintaining HAAG's financial management systems. Libby's dedication to her work has been critical to financial health of the organisation. Also to the Finance Sub Committee team, Kris Sparks, Sue Marino and Fiona York thank you – we have done well! And of course to other Committee members and staff for keeping the ship afloat after emerging from some stormy weather.

I recommend that the membership of HAAG endorse the Financial Reports for the 2019.2020 financial year.

MEMBERSHIP

Last but most importantly, we are a member-based organization, and we are always looking at new ways to engage our members and attract new ones. This year we welcomed 48 new members, partly due to the welcome addition of our interstate friends in the National Alliance of Seniors for Housing, one of our working groups.

We held two face-to-face meetings this year at Ross House for members, as well as our AGM. One was our End-of-Year Volunteer and Member Luncheon (pictured), which was well-attended and featured door prizes and great food!

The second event was our March General Meeting, where we farewelled Jeff Fiedler after 23 years (pictured).

In March, the global pandemic hit Melbourne, Ross House closed and we moved to online engagement with our members. Our May General meeting was the first held online, and our Committee, sub-committee and working groups meetings also moved online. Our membership officer Joanne commenced calling members to check in and see how they were faring under lockdown. We look forward to re-commencing face-to-face meetings, but appreciate that online gives us the opportunity for people in places other than Melbourne to contribute to our organization.





HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

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