

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

Annual Report 2009 2010



Ena Ahern, Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Intake Worker, Molly Hadfield OAM and HAAG life member, and Wyn Stenton, HAAG Committee Member and founding member of HAAG's Residential Parks and Villages Working Group. Here they are attending the opening inspection of the new older persons' public housing development at Roberts Street, Northcote. HAAG's lobbying and support for residents at Roberts Street was integral to the success of the redevelopment of this housing estate.

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Our Organisation

Housing for the Aged Action Group is the state-wide organisation of older renters in Victoria – across all rental housing types. For tenants in private rental; public and community managed housing; caravan and residential parks; rooming houses; independent living units; and a range of new models of older persons' housing including rental villages and semi-independent living.

The Committee of Management meets monthly at Ross House, 247-251 Flinders Lane, to handle the administrative and financial business of HAAG's services and the group's functions, and to act upon housing issues of concern to older people. Members are elected at the Annual General Meeting of HAAG, and casual vacancies are filled by Committee with general membership endorsement. 100% of the Committee are older people. Committee meetings are open to all members to attend.

Committee for the year as from AGM 2009-2010:

Dalene Salisbury (Chairperson), Doreen Rushby (Secretary), Patrick Barron (Treasurer), Helen Ohlhoff (Public Officer), Bob Brooks, Amy Duncan, Molly Hadfield O.A.M., Sivarasa Nallaratum, Patricia Black, Robert Purves, Wyn Stenton, Robert Newey, Richard Tate. Thanks to all of our hard working Committee of Management for their support and continued lobbying for more public housing; for their presence at forums, workshops, rallies, and public meetings and for always being prepared to promote the services and mission of Housing for the Aged Action Group.

HAAG also wishes to acknowledge the wonderful funding and collaborative support provided by Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Department of Health and Ageing.



Our Chairperson, Dalene Salisbury

As you will see in the report, it has been another busy and productive year at Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) and as in previous years I am always amazed and very proud at both the volume and quality of work undertaken by our organisation.



Highlights for the year have included the establishment of our Retirement Housing Advice and Support Service; the establishment of our State-wide Intake, Referral and Housing Options Service; and success by HAAG's Residential Parks and Villages Working Group in achieving legislative reform that provides park and village residents with improved security of tenure and living conditions.

Between the two new services plus our existing Tenancy Advice Program and ACHA Outreach Service, we continued our focus on improving older low income renters with access to housing information and services. It is heartening to see that a record number of people were seen and assisted with their housing problems. One of the most gratifying aspects of being the Chair at HAAG is the positive feedback and heartfelt thanks that our organisation receives from people who until contacting us were in a distressed state due to their housing situation.

In addition to the number of clients assisted by our services, many more hundreds of individuals and organisations were provided with information through our community education sessions, forums and meetings. I am pleased to say through these avenues HAAG continued to tackle the real political issues around housing for older people. Topics covered were the provision of social and public housing and we have had significant input into both Federal and State Governments' housing strategies.

Of course none of our achievements would have been possible without the hard work and dedication from all involved with HAAG. I would like to particularly thank my fellow Committee members for their support and encouragement throughout the year, to all HAAG members for their continued support of our aims and to our workers for all of their efforts and dedication. I would also like to thank our funding bodies Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Department of Health & Ageing and say how very grateful we are to them for their ongoing support of us. A special mention this year to the Myer Foundation for their Commemorative Grant for the organisational capacity building funding, and to United Way for their ongoing support of our ACHA outreach clients.

In closing, I commend this Annual Report to you and I look forward to a year of further achievement by working with all of you in 2011.

Our Members

An integral part of the functioning of our organisation is the commitment of our members to our activities. A number of our members consistently dedicate a great deal of time to a range of our work. This may involve help around the office including the arduous tasks of folding leaflets and helping with mail outs. Most notably this year a number of our members put themselves forward to talk publicly about their own housing situation through our film co-production with the University of Western Sydney on the plight of older renters. Our members were also active through forums, radio programs, letters to the Editor. It is extremely difficult and often intimidating to speak publicly about your own living situation but without the personal story the housing issue would never receive any press. So to all of those members who put themselves forward we are extremely grateful.



Our Services

HAAG's dedicated team of workers are April Bragg (ACHA/Myer Project), Melanie Mills (ACHA Outreach), Ena Ahern (ACHA Intake Service), Jenny Dale (Retirement Housing Service-from October 2009), Kaye Trainor (Administration Manager), Ani Loriente (Accounts), Jeff Fiedler (Tenancy Advice/Policy Worker).

Housing Options Information and Referral Service

Background

This is the first full year the Victoria State-wide Older Persons Housing Options Information, Advice and Referral Service has been combined with an Intake program funded by the Commonwealth Government through the ACHA (*Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged*) Program. The position is now the *State-wide Intake, Referral and Housing Options program*. HAAG had successfully demonstrated to the ACHA funding body, the Commonwealth Government, that there was a growing need for this service due to the increased number of callers to the HAAG office requesting housing information and housing assistance. Prior to this new position there had been two ACHA State-wide outreach workers, with the Older Persons Housing Options Information, Advice and Referral service an unfunded service provided by HAAG.



ACHA Intake Worker, Ena Ahern

The funding arrangement followed successful negotiations in early 2009 with the Commonwealth Government to replace one of the outreach ACHA workers positions as the *State-wide Intake worker for the ACHA program* in Victoria. The State-wide ACHA Intake worker for the year commencing 1st of July 2009 – 30th June 2010 now has hard data to demonstrate the effectiveness of this position.

The Intake, Referral and Housing Options Program

The Intake, Referral and Housing Options program is the central ACHA service for people throughout Victoria who need to be linked into ACHA support services in their local area. As can be seen by the data below most people seeking our assistance are people living in insecure, expensive private rental which has become unaffordable and unsustainable for anyone living on a fixed pension. Many are afraid to ask for necessary repairs and live in constant fear that the landlord will increase the rent or serve them a 60 day Notice to Vacate. They are frightened they will end up homeless on the street because they have no knowledge of how to go about obtaining assistance. Nor are they aware of what supports are available. They have struggled to cope believing they are not as badly off as others who need assistance. They are members of all our communities, many of whom are living with complex medical conditions such as diabetes; stroke, cardiac conditions, with many living with cancers and recovering from surgery and chemotherapy. Many have physical injuries and mobilise with great difficulty with walkers and walking sticks and some are in wheelchairs. Their housing is linked to their mental and physical health. They are very proud people who have attempted to maintain a positive attitude despite their extreme concerns. Some have rented the same property for 15 years whilst others have rented for much

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longer than this and have never missed paying the rent on the due date.

The impact of housing insecurity is devastating to many. It compounds their illness and impacts on their recovery from ill health. Many report that they are pacing during the night, unable to sleep because they cannot stop worrying. They worry about the landlord wanting the house/unit back. They worry about the steep increase in rents they feel they will be unable to manage in the near future. They do not want to leave the area because their home is their community and they have access to all their services such as medical, council HACC services and their pharmacist services. Many attend their GP's surgery with 'nerves' and depression and need medication to control the anxiety. Many openly state their blood pressure is through the roof.

Though the *Intake, Referral and Housing Options* program is funded to be a State-wide program we have successfully assisted older Victorians to return from Interstate to live near their families in Victoria. Currently Intake is liaising with ACHA in Brisbane to assist an older woman living in Country Victoria return to live with her family in the South Brisbane area. She had moved to Victoria to care for her very unwell sister who has since passed away. Brisbane ACHA has stated they will assist if HAAG can organise the application for Queensland public housing. Through advocacy and negotiation with a program in the country town where she lives the Community Connections Intake program worker is assisting with this matter as all paperwork had been forwarded by HAAG. We are hopeful of a positive outcome.

The Intake, Referral and Housing Options Data

The data has been collated monthly and presented to the Committee of Management at most meetings throughout the year. This data has demonstrated an increase on the previous year's number of people requesting assistance. Also captured within the information is the number of organisations referring in for assistance and advice. These organisations include hospital Social Workers, Community based Social Workers, RSL Health and Aged Welfare program, ACAS (Aged Care Assessment Services), Centrelink, Carer support groups, CAV (Consumer Affairs Victoria), SRV (Seniors Rights Victoria), SAAP (Supported Accommodation and Assistance program), Local Government workers, Shire office workers, CACP's (Community Aged Care Packages) case managers and HACC house cleaning workers. Some parliamentarians have also contact HAAG and referred people for assistance.

There is an Internal and External referral process within this position. Some people are referred internally to our ACHA outreach position and CAV positions, the *Private Renter's Assistance* program and also the *Retirement Housing Advice and Support* program. External referrals link people with supports in their local area. This has meant finding out what services are available in Country Victoria and what programs are available in country towns. Through this contact with our Country Victoria colleagues and also with Interstate ACHA colleagues there is greater understanding of HAAG's role and support services. All agencies referred to by HAAG's ACHA Intake worker express similar compassion and support for the people they are assisting. All are happy to assist in whatever way they can when they hear the distress of the frail elderly citizens in their communities. People are referred onto their nearest ACHA provider if living out of the HAAG's outreach ACHA catchment area. All ACHA workers assist people to complete the Office of Housing application forms, and assist with any complex paperwork, and link them into secure, affordable, long term public, social or community housing.

Due to the complexity of some people's needs often a referral is sent to the Community Connec-

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tions Program – a Victorian Government program that assists people living with chronic medical needs and mental health issues who are at risk of homelessness.

Housing is not a standalone issue for many people. They need to be linked in with medical supports and have an Aged Care Assessment which identifies the supports required by people to remain living in the community and prevent premature entry into a hostel or nursing home. To receive these services there is the matter of having a secure home. As demonstrated by the data collated in the 2010 financial year HAAG's new Intake service is providing the link between housing and the aged care services people need.

Outcomes of the first year of HAAG's new intake service linking aged care and housing services during 2009-2010

2500 older people contacted HAAG with 727 referrals to ACHA (Assistance with care and Housing for the Aged) Intake Service. They were referred from 300 different organisations. 457 were about to be homeless (numbers have doubled in 1st year). 50% were aged over 70, 30% aged 60-69. 80% were living in private rental accommodation, 10% were staying with friends or 'couch surfing', 10% were living temporarily in health crisis accommodation. 70% were female. 37% of tenants sought HAAG support to leave their housing due to cost of rent or rent increase. The average rent paid was between \$200-\$275 per week (this represents 50% – 70% of their income including rent assistance). 62% sought help after receiving a Notice to Vacate. Of those who received a Notice to Vacate 66% had received a 60 day Notice To Vacate. This means that the landlord wanted possession of the tenant's home because they were selling, renovating or occupying the house themselves. 29% received a 120 day Notice to Vacate for no specified reason notice. Only 2.5% of our clients received a 14 day Notice To Vacate for being in rent arrears. The age of people receiving Notices to Vacate were: 35% 60-69, 52% 70-79, 10% 80+. Of the 457 critical cases 660 housing applications were required to be made to attempt to find a housing solution for clients.

The main issues from the HAAG service data:

- HAAG has recently established specialist support networks for older people as older people do not use mainstream services. This networking (and worsening of the housing crisis for older renters) has doubled the contacts from older people in crisis in our first year, demonstrating the need for better linking of aged specific organisations with specialist aged specific housing services. As the data shows there were 300 different organisations that made referrals to HAAG.
- A significant proportion (50%) of clients were over 70 years of age.
- The vast majority of HAAG clients were living in private rental accommodation, a different profile of older homeless people than is usually portrayed or understood i.e. rough sleeping, complex problems.
- A high proportion (70%) of clients were female, suggesting that older single women are most at risk of eviction due to their longevity compared to males and their relative lower levels of savings and assets.
- A significant proportion of older people contacted HAAG because they were forced to leave their housing due to high rents and excessive rent rises.
- The average rent paid by older renters who contacted HAAG for help was in the range of 50-70% of their income. This figure is far higher than the accepted affordability benchmark of 30% of income.
- A high proportion (62%) of older renters who contacted HAAG for help had been served

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with a Notice to Vacate.

- Of those served with a Notice to Vacate a high proportion (66%) received a 60 day Notice to Vacate, which is an NTV used for standard investment purposes such as selling, renovating, and also owners occupying their own property. ***In other words, older people are being evicted and facing trauma and illness as a consequence of normal commercial activity.*** This demonstrates the completely inappropriate nature of private rental housing as an option for older people and that government annual investment of two billion dollars on rent assistance to help renters to live in private rental does not help most older people in this form of housing tenure. Governments are also spending \$2.2 billion each year on providing aged care services in older people's own homes, but not addressing the housing needs of vulnerable older people receiving those services. Therefore the government policy of ageing-in-place is not working for this vulnerable and high need group.
- Only 2.5% of older people contacting HAAG for assistance were in rent arrears, demonstrating that older people generally manage to pay their rent, even when it may be taking up to 70% of their income. Older people will do without other essentials such as food, heating and other essentials to ensure they have a roof over their head.



Some of the housing conditions we have found older people living in this year.

- A high proportion (62%) of older people contacting HAAG for assistance were over 70 years of age with a significant number (10%) being over 80. Unless policies are put in place immediately by government to address this problem then the proportion of people over 80 years of age in housing difficulty will dramatically increase. Therefore those who are most vulnerable due to health complications will also be facing the trauma of housing stress.
- The difficulty in housing older people after being evicted is demonstrated by the high num-

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ber of applications required to find housing (660 applications to a range of providers for 457 clients).

ACHA Outreach Program

Over the past year seventy eight people received assistance from HAAG's ACHA outreach program. The majority of people needing assistance were those facing eviction, generally within 60 days. Once a person is referred into the Outreach Service they receive intensive assistance and support to resolve their housing crisis and most people receive this assistance over a three month period. During this time the Outreach Worker will work with the person to find housing and will concentrate on such things as the most suitable type and location of housing that they need, when and where that housing is likely to be available, and what services or resources they need to access such housing. As can be seen by the data above this process is involved and detailed and often involves multiple housing applications.

During this time the worker will also assist the person to access any other services that they may need in the future. It is crucial that, once the person has been assisted into alternative accommodation, information, advice and support is given in contacting local health, aged and community services. Without this support, particularly after the trauma of moving house, a frail older person's health can deteriorate at such rate that they are no longer able to live independently. It is part of the Outreach Worker's role to ensure that older people in this difficult position are assisted and encouraged to become familiar with and utilise local support services.



This is what we found at a rooming house upon visiting a client who was complaining about his landlord. In reality it is an outside verandah but the slum-landlord called it a dining room.

Retirement Housing Service

This year saw the establishment of the Retirement Housing Service at HAAG. The service was funded as a result of a detailed submission by HAAG, based on extensive knowledge and experience in retirement housing. HAAG had identified a major gap in the housing support systems available to Victorian consumers, particularly older, vulnerable people who were confronted with an increasingly complex system.



Jenny Dale
Retirement Housing Worker

There has been rapid change and growth in the retirement housing options over the past few years which has included a range of hybrid models of older persons cluster or village housing, notably in residential parks and villages. The Retirement Village Act has also recently undergone some legislative reform. The older style not-for-profit independent living units sector was also of concern, as the stock ages and becomes less accessible.

The aim of the service is to provide information, advice and support to residents of a range of retirement housing. These include not-for-profit independent living units, retirement villages, residential parks and villages and the newly emerging rental villages. The service target is older people who live in not-for-profit retirement villages, residential villages, residential parks caravan parks and rental villages who are vulnerable due to frailty, financial and/or health issues.

Establishment of the Retirement Housing Service

The service was initially funded by CAV as a twelve month pilot project. It is a pleasure to report that at the end of the reporting period CAV confirmed ongoing funding for this important service. The first task undertaken to establish the service was to recruit the worker. After extensive advertising and interviewing, Jenny Dale was offered the position and commenced in October 2009. Jenny came to HAAG with a wide range of professional experience in the aged, health and community sectors, having worked in government, hospitals and not for profit agencies. Setting up the service involved a number of processes and activities including liaising with other service providers, development of eligibility guidelines, service priorities and promotional material, identifying data collection requirements and promotion of the service through presentations to groups, seniors press articles and distribution of brochures to residents of retirement living units. HAAG appreciates the support provided in the establishment of the service by CAV, not only by funding the service, but also through the opportunity to meet regularly to discuss service data, emerging issues and trends.

Reflection on the Year's Activities

The need for this service has been confirmed by the number of clients provided with support and advice during the past twelve months. Clients provided with ongoing support and advocacy totalled 131 and those who were provided with advice only totalled 141. The data collection system was enhanced during the second half of the year in order to better capture detailed information about client demographics, need and service outcomes.

The two service response categories of ongoing going support/advocacy and advice only calls

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were developed to reflect the demands on the service as a result of promotional strategies. Generally, advice only calls were one off contacts where the request related to rights or general information. These calls did not require ongoing support, however all required specialist information and referral.

A review of the issues that people requested assistance with, where ongoing support was provided, substantiates the need for this service. The majority of requests related to rights information, support in cases of harassment and inappropriate practices by operators and managers.

Residents of not for profit retirement villages are often fearful of losing their home if they question decisions made by management which are unfair or even when they ask for repairs and maintenance. HAAG has been made aware of bullying of residents who have made a reasonable request. Sadly, some management/operators appear unable to satisfactorily resolve instances where discrimination occurs. Interestingly, the majority of the clients supported were single older women who appear to be vulnerable in terms of having their rights respected.

Individual clients from residential parks and villages often reflected the "tip of the iceberg" of unjust treatment in their village. Often a referral from one client will lead to others from the same village contacting HAAG. In order to meet the needs of groups of residents with common issues an innovative group 'clinic' or consultation has been developed. This provides a forum for advice on common issues. The issues raised have included the lack of communal facilities that were promised by operators, building faults and repairs and bullying.

A small number of clients who live in rental villages were provided with assistance. This was in relation to provision of substandard meals and bullying. Rental villages provide accommodation and meals to older people usually at a cost of 85% of the pension. Some operators also offer in home support services (cleaning, personal care etc) for an additional cost. The questions that arises from this are:- How are these services regulated? Are residents advised that these services can be provided through government funded programs at a lower cost? The growth of this type of accommodation is of concern to HAAG due to the cost, the lack of regulation and the security and safety of residents.

Ongoing promotion and liaison with a range of local government, health and community services has ensured that information about the service is available to may be aware of vulnerable older people living in retirement housing who don't where to go for help.

In summary, the first year of the Retirement Housing service has provided much needed assistance and support to vulnerable residents who have experienced a range of difficulties. Issues that HAAG has been concerned about for some time comprise the most common subjects of requests for support. The confirmation of the continued funding for this service allows HAAG to continue this important work as well as alerting government to the difficulties experienced by low income residents of low cost retirement housing.

Tenancy Advice Service

During the year our Tenancy Advice Service was re-structured with the introduction during the year of our Retirement Housing Service operated by our Retirement Housing Worker Jenny Dale. In previous years our Tenancy Advice Service has incorporated all housing types including retirement villages, residential parks, rental villages, independent living units and private rental accommodation. For the most part of the past 12 months HAAG has been able to re-structure our services and separate the roles which has allowed for a specialist focus on specific types of housing. This has meant we have been able to provide a service dedicated to providing legal advice to older people living in private rental accommodation.

Over the year this service has provided intensive assistance to 106 older people who are in difficulty in their housing. There are usually four main factors that tenants seek our help for: Rent increases, notices to vacate, poor housing conditions or needing help to get home modifications after a deterioration in health or increased disability.

There continues to be high levels of requests for information and advocacy due to the worsening of the private rental market and the number of vulnerable older people requiring assistance. Recent enhancements to HAAG's overall service structures, improved networks through our Housing Options Information Service and continued referrals from CAV has also had a significant impact on the service. HAAG's tenancy service evaluates the client's legal standing and may negotiate with the landlord or even defend the client at VCAT in cases where the notice is deemed invalid or retaliatory. Additionally, referrals may be made to other HAAG services or to external agencies for assistance to find other accommodation.

Unmanageable rent increases where older people continue to be priced out of the market continue to be a major issue.

Some examples of rent increases experienced by clients for the 12 months were:

\$826 increased to \$956 per month
\$980 - \$1200 per month
\$780 - \$824 per month
\$860 - \$940 per month
\$640 - \$880 per month (bedsitter)
\$1240 - \$1400 (negotiated by HAAG, original notice \$1520)
\$950 - \$1050 per month
\$605 - \$804 per month
\$975 - \$1360 per month

Many of these rent increases have made each tenant's rental situation completely unaffordable and further raises the conclusion that private rental accommodation as a sector completely fails older renters. Each of these situations has an enormous personal human cost in terms of stress and other health impacts, especially considering that the majority of these cases also required assistance to find other accommodation and the trauma of relocation (if a suitable housing option was found). Many current clients are currently on a precipice of fear and doubt as their NTV expiry date draws nearer.

Is this a problem for regulators? It is becoming less and less the case as affordable alternative

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private rental housing becomes scarcer and expectations that regulation of the private rental market can create a suitable environment for renters who rely on the aged pension to survive. Unless major changes such as long term leases and rent control are introduced into law then the prospects of private rental housing being a viable option will continue to diminish. The opportunity to challenge excessive rent increases under the Residential Tenancies Act has become almost redundant as massive rent increases do not appear to be contrary to overall market conditions in recent years. In fact inspectors have often quietly advised us not to proceed with requests for inspections as it could have the opposite effect – alert landlords that they could in fact obtain even higher rents than are currently being sought.

A recent trend has been an increase in the assistance to older men in the Italian community. Five lengthy ongoing cases have been taken on by the service for clients in the Carlton and Brunswick areas. This demand reflects the ageing Italian population and the minority of this group who have not achieved home ownership; do not have family networks in Australia; and who have maintained cultural community ties in original migrant locations. This has caused pressure on our services as housing assistance has required clients to be relocated within a defined area. Networks have been improved with the Italian welfare community, such as Co-As-It, to ensure that clients received all the help they need and that any further clients can be referred to HAAG.

The service has also discovered further appalling housing conditions suffered by elderly tenants. In some cases this has involved straight-forward cases such as tenants whose heating systems have broken down over winter. The complicating factor has been the lack of response from real estate agents. This highlights a common issue for older tenants: they are often neglected by property managers who do not respond quickly to urgent issues, even when the agent is fully aware of the problems involved. One tenant went without heating in June for 15 days and the property manager advised them to “read the heater’s manual” and were also told that if a maintenance person attended and it was found that there was no fault then the tenant would be charged \$140 as a call-out fee. It was only when HAAG became involved and, after fruitless negotiation, made an urgent VCAT application, that the problem was fixed.

In another case a tenant was visited who said that he had not been able to use his lights for 18 months because his ceiling was flooded every time it rained. His ceilings were black with mould and water ran down electrical wiring and flooded his kitchen floor. When HAAG contacted the property manager he said that he had been “trying to do everything he could to get the owners corporation to act” (in a block of 20 flats). He also told the tenant that “every time it rains I think of you”!!!!. During this time the agent even took action to evict the tenant for being in rent arrears even though the tenant told him he wasn’t paying rent because of the condition of the flat. Even though the problem had existed for 18 months HAAG immediately applied to VCAT for urgent repairs to be done. Within two days the roof had been fixed (at least temporarily as an emergency) and the electrical wiring made safe. HAAG is continuing to assist the tenant by organising an extensive compensation claim and also finding him affordable housing.

Myer Foundation — Celebrating our Partners Project

The Celebrating Our Partners project commenced in December 2009 with the aim of building HAAG's long-term viability. The project emphasis is on obtaining funding for our 'Housing Options Service' and growing our membership through the promotion of both HAAG's services and meeting with older people about their housing issues and what they see as possible solutions.

During the year we completed the 'Housing Options Service' submission and presented this to a number of federal government departments and we are now in the process of presenting the submission to the state government in response to their 2020 Homelessness Strategy.

The project has provided us with the opportunity to review the housing information we provide to the broader Victorian community and we are currently in the process of establishing a specific housing information centre. Part of our information review was to include information on how the new Social Housing providers operate and to further our knowledge on how people can access this type of housing. To this end we met a number of times with four of the providers that have building projects underway. It is our intention to make all of this information electronically available on HAAG's web page.

Membership recruitment has occurred through community education sessions, held in metropolitan and country Victoria and through two significant HAAG forums, the Victorian Parliament Inquiry into Public Housing and HAAG's Social & Public Housing forum targeted at public housing tenants and applicants.

The project also has a broader research role and we have participated in the Foundations research program on the wider issue of capacity building of the not-for-profit sector. The research is being conducted by the Queensland University of Technology's Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Non-profit Studies. The research findings will be important to the non-profit sector as it is hoped the broader Australian grant maker network will see the value in capacity building grants.

We once again thank the Myer Foundation for this wonderful opportunity and look forward to consolidating our project work over the next twelve months with the aim of making HAAG more effective and responsive to the housing needs of older Victorian renters.



April (right) met with the Myer Foundation representative Kirsty Allen (second right) and other grant recipients at a discussion forum in Ross House.

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April Bragg in discussion with Housing Minister Richard Wynne (above). Molly Hadfield (right) makes a point at a forum. Members Carmel, Maree and Carol (below) in discussion at an event.



Members Vi and Gladys (left) and HAAG Committee Richard Tait (above).



HAAG CAMPAIGNS AND POLICY ACTION

Public or Social Housing—Your Right to Choose

A statewide forum on the future of public housing was held on June 28 2010. Since the landmark Social Housing Innovations Project Report by Hal Bissett in 2000, there has been much discussion about ways of increasing the housing stock of the community and social housing sectors. Transferring one-third of public housing stock to housing associations was one of the main ideas proposed in that report.

While the issue of stock transfers has been on the back-burner for a number of years, and some stock has been redeveloped with new management companies involved, recent statements by government and community leaders has raised the prospect of public housing transfers once again. This prospect raises a number of issues of concern for tenants regarding their current and future rights as tenants of public and not-for-profit housing.

The Victorian Government, in their Integrated Housing Strategy released in March 2010, announced that they will “develop a five-year growth plan to continue the expansion of housing associations in Victoria. The plan will consider options for a **“targeted conversion of public housing stock to association stock”**. Also, at the National Housing Conference in November 2009 the Federal Housing Minister Tanya Plibersek, in her keynote speech, promoted the view that there should be a transfer of 10,000 public housing units to social housing providers. More recently, the Tenants Union of Victoria stated, in their submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Public Housing that “at least half of the existing Office of Housing stock should be transferred.”

The forum aimed to hear from the Office of Housing about the government’s plans, provide an opportunity for housing associations to promote the values of their housing model, and most importantly, create a forum for tenants to ask questions, raise issues and have a say about the transfer of their homes to social housing providers.

The event was quite successful with its purpose of creating an opportunity for tenants to gain a better understanding of the aims and objectives of the government plans for the future of public housing and the housing associations. The key spokesperson for the Office of Housing, Robert Macbeth, who is in charge of the overall development of the housing association model, presented a range of information about current and future projects. Of particular interest to HAAG was his announcement that a not- for- profit rental village is to be developed. Jo McInerney from the Office of the Housing Registrar, talked about the regulatory regime. She also responded to the auditor-general’s report that was released a week before the forum that had been critical of the lack of transparency of the policies and procedures of the housing associations and stated that they are ‘cherry-picking’ tenants on higher incomes and neglecting applicants with complex needs. The speakers stayed for the afternoon session and this gave the audience the opportunity to raise a number of questions and challenge some of the current practices.

Feature article - appeared in Parity Journal June 2010

The Ageing Elephant in the Room -The Plight of Older Private Renters

During this year Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) has highlighted the plight of older people caught in private rental housing poverty who are unable to afford increasing rents, are in constant fear of eviction and who need quality housing as they age. Our services see a constant stream of older people in this form of housing crisis.

While there are many groundbreaking policy initiatives that are being implemented from the White Paper, it is frustrating for organisations like ours that the Commonwealth Government again has ignored the plight of older private renters who are, by the government's own estimation, the highest needs group of all ages and housing tenures. For example, Australian Government research has found that older people in housing stress has doubled from 52,000 in 2004 to 112,000 in 2008 and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released data in 2009 that shows that older private renters pay more of their income in rent than any other age group or tenure type .

Similarly, the White Paper documented an alarming increase in older people experiencing housing difficulties. It cites the 2006 census that showed an alarming increase in the number of older people who were homeless. Compared to 2001 there has been a 36% increase in homelessness for the 55-64 age group and a 23% increase for those aged over 65. ***These figures represent the two greatest increases of all age groups over the 5 year period.*** The report also highlighted a 30% increase in older people in housing stress between 2003-2007.

In contrast to this alarming need, the interim targets set in the White Paper for 2013 mention reductions in homelessness specifically for other demographic groups such as families, young people and children, but no broad targets for older people. On another initiative some 1500 former Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) specialist services will continue to be funded under the new National Affordable Housing Agreement, yet it is well documented that older people do not seek assistance from SAAP services. For example, in 2007-08 only 1.7% of SAAP clients were aged over 65 .

Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged

One of the important acknowledgements for older people in the White Paper is the previously announced continuation of the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program to the tune of \$18.4 million over 4 years. However the statement does not provide any additional financial commitment. While the White Paper announced a 55% overall increase in expenditure on homelessness programs, the ACHA component comprises a paltry \$4.1 million dollars a year allocated nationally. In overall terms the ACHA allocation represents .05% of the total budget for homelessness, a disproportionately small amount compared to the increase in homelessness and housing poverty for older people as previously described.

ACHA will unfortunately continue to be a minor program providing a major role in the homelessness prevention field. ACHA should be expanded ten-fold before it can begin to address the real need in the community.

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Positive initiatives for older people

A positive side to the White paper programs for older people is the funds allocated for additional aged care accommodation specifically for older homeless people. This is a groundbreaking initiative and is well targeted to the needs of clients who have been sleeping rough and where homelessness is borne from a mix of alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness and housing poverty. Providing support to organisations like Wintringham is absolutely the right approach to addressing the needs of this group. Wintringham's method of support for their clients is so successful because it is person centred, non-judgemental and understands that the heart of care for older people is decent housing with appropriate health, aged care and social supports where required. A fantastic community has been constructed out of the Wintringham philosophy and its *modus operandi*.

Further, the White Paper initiative to amend the Aged Care Act, in essence to provide priority access to residential care for frail older people who are homeless is also an important step forward. This decision provides much needed access for older people with high care needs into the mainstream aged care system. It provides funding for purpose built facilities and perhaps most importantly, acknowledges that the health and aged care system has some responsibility in ensuring that housing is an important component of a person's care needs as they age.

Limited definition of older homeless people

However it is unfortunate that the government has chosen to limit the scope of its attack on older persons' homelessness by focusing only on the most marginalised group of older people who generally have a complex range of problems. By this limited definition the White Paper fundamentally misrepresents the complete picture of older persons' homelessness. In an almost ageist way, the White Paper states that "*Older people experiencing homelessness have a different profile to that of other older Australians. They are more likely to have experienced mental illness or cognitive impairment, often as a result of alcohol and substance abuse.*" This definition limits the scope of the White Paper initiatives to be able to impact on other older people in high need. There is a much larger population of older people who are regularly on the cusp of housing eviction and in transition from one form of insecure housing to another due to their limited income, insecure housing tenure and difficulty accessing public housing or other forms of affordable accommodation such as independent living units.

The vast majority of older people who are threatened with homelessness have the single disadvantage that private rental housing is insecure, unaffordable on the aged pension and is not an adaptable form of housing as their disability needs increase with age. The White paper identifies that 17% of people classified as homeless on census night 2006 were over 55 years of age and numbered almost 18,000. However, in addition to this group there are 111,000 people aged 65 and over living in the private rental market who are in danger of homelessness if the landlord decides to sell, or they get a \$50 a week rent increase, or they have a health incident and can no longer manage to live in their home due to steps, or the landlord is unwilling to allow minor home modifications. In many other cases older people are in immediate housing danger when their spouse dies and suddenly their pension has to pay all of the rent that was previously shared.

Other common HAAG cases involve people over 75 years of age who have rented their home for 20-30 years who suddenly receive a 60 day Notice to Vacate due to the landlord seeking vacant possession to sell the home, or they have received an outrageous rent increase (often in the

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range of \$40-\$50 week) that is intended to tip them 'over the edge' of their ability to pay so that the landlord can replace them with higher income renters. Such a shock to a person's well-being at an advanced age can cause a health crisis that further complicates the tenant's predicament. A hospital bed is not a very sensible place to be when you should be out looking for a new home. Premature entry into residential care caused by the downward spiral of ill-health caused by a housing 'shock' is another avoidable consequence of not having adequate supports in place for older private renters. These are just a few of the myriad of circumstances that arise constantly in the poorly regulated private rental market that frequently puts older people under threat of homelessness.

This situation continues to worsen in Melbourne as rents have risen alarmingly in the metropolitan area. According to the Rental Report produced by the Department of Human Services "from 2006 to the first quarter of 2009 (there was) a sharp and significant decline in the availability of affordable private rental accommodation in metropolitan Melbourne". The median rent for a one bedroom flat is now \$270 a week. This represents 70% of the aged pension, even with the rent assistance supplement added to a person's income.

So why haven't the needs of this group of low income older people been understood and addressed by government? There are a number of possible reasons, such as:

First, there is little detailed data on older people and homelessness. As well as the low level of contact made by older people to SAAP services mentioned previously, it is extraordinary that the Department of Health and Ageing has not collated and released any data from the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program since its inception in 1995. These specialist services have high case loads and are linked into the most appropriate networks in the health and aged care fields where older people are most likely to seek assistance and support. For example, HAAG's ACHA service helped 151 older renters in the first two months of 2010 alone. The complexity of the referral processes used by older people is also highlighted by the fact that there were 128 separate origins of referral to HAAG between July-December 2009. The referral point, profile of each person, their housing problem and housing outcome provide valuable insights into the current trends and impacts on older low income renters. The national ACHA data that is collected would tell an extraordinary story if they were ever compiled and made available. This lack of analysis by government has hidden the scale and detail of the threat of homelessness faced by older renters.

Secondly, appropriate housing support networks for older people have never been established that would provide further data for their needs to be understood. There are two main problems: Older people do not seek housing assistance through mainstream housing support services, and the health and aged care services where 'at risk' older people are most likely to make contact are not skilled at identifying and dealing with a client's housing problems. It is unfortunately the case that the majority of aged care agencies have not heard of the ACHA Program, even though they are funded by the same department. A standardised procedure should be in place whereby aged care staff are trained to identify housing problems and automatically refer an older person to an appropriate specialist older persons support agency where required.

Thirdly, to compliment the establishment of a responsive network there is a need for a 'one-stop' information service that aged care and other older persons' services can contact when they identify an older person in housing difficulty. This is necessary due to the increasing complexity of the housing support systems where a range of options may be explored, depending on the circum-

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stances and needs of the client. The importance of such a service has recently been recognised in Great Britain where a national housing options information service was established by the Brown Government in 2008. HAAG has operated an unfunded service since 1998 but we do not have the resources to develop the required structure to adequately address the problem.

The overall question is whether the majority of 'at-risk' older people have been put into the too-hard basket. We argue that unless governments tackle this bigger issue it cannot meet its target of halving homelessness by 2020 because the group who are in housing poverty today in the private market will be tomorrow's homelessness victims. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) predicts that low income older households will more than double from 195,000 to 419,000 by 2026. Our challenge is to determine how the increasing numbers of older people at risk of eviction and homelessness will be supported and housed.

(This article can be downloaded from the HAAG website : www.oldertenants.org.au)

Residential Parks and Villages Reform

HAAG has continued to work on the issue of Caravan and Residential Parks over the year. In July 2009 HAAG completed our submission in response to the 'Options paper: Tenancy policy framework for residential parks' that was the culmination of widespread consultation with residents across Victoria. The Residential Parks and Villages Working Group also embarked on a campaign to ensure that residents views are well understood by government and the state parliament. This work took three main forms: A letter was sent to all members of parliament seeking their support with a request to contact the Minister for Consumer Affairs. A number of responses were received. Secondly, a pro-forma letter was distributed to residents in dozens of parks and villages across Victoria. The letter was addressed to the Minister for Consumer Affairs seeking his support on the issue of the importance of security of tenure. The working group was informed by the Minister's office that they had been inundated with letters that numbered over 300. They reached a stage where they stopped opening the letters and referred them to Consumer Affairs officers for documentation. Third, a meeting was sought with the Minister for Consumer Affairs to discuss the fundamental problems faced by residents. Our working group was grateful that the Minister was available to meet and he provided an hour long opportunity for residents to explain their concerns.

The representatives of the working group who attended were from the most vulnerable category: those who had invested significant personal and financial contributions to their new home and lifestyle yet had either no long term lease or as little as 5 years in duration. This was a significant effort on the part of the residents involved who travelled from Bendigo and Inverloch for the meeting.

Later, during the final stages of our lobbying, two working group representatives met with the Minister for Housing Richard Wynne to put our case and the powerful representation of their personal experience of problems and the need for solutions seemed to make a strong impression on the Minister. It is evident that at many levels of government HAAG's views on residential parks and villages are well known due to a number of strategies used to get the message across. It also is important to note that CAV has also been very proactive in seeking the views of HAAG and our working group and we have been very grateful that the issues residents have raised have been listened to by government. We may not have achieved our aims of reform at this stage but we believe that the state government is genuine in its commitment that we are in a longer term

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process that requires further research and work to achieve our aims.

HAAG also put together a submission to the Department of Planning and Community Development on the re-making of the Regulations to the Residential Tenancies Act on Caravan Parks and Movable Dwellings. There are some crucial parts to the Regulations that HAAG was keen to comment on such as the standards of the construction of the dwellings and the registration procedures for caravan and residential parks. The response from DPCD to our submission addressed some of our concerns but not all. One major issue that is really the 'elephant in the room' is the fact that the dwellings in residential parks and villages do not provide proper access for people with disabilities and the standard design is not suitable for an ageing population. This is not a big issue now as most residents are in their 60's. In twenty years time when residents need more adaptable housing we will have an enormous problem on our hands.



HAAG's Residential Villages Working Group (above) and (right) 100 residents at Federation Village Werribee meet to discuss the Consumer Affairs Victoria Options paper.

Thank you to all the fantastic members of the Residential Parks and Villages Working Group who have committed so much time and energy working for residents across Victoria. This year has seen their efforts culminate in real reform and action at the state government level.

June Snapshot - Getting across the picture of the older homeless

HAAG has initiated a new project called the June Snapshot. This project has developed through HAAG's organisation of the Older Persons Housing Network that involves a number of agencies who work for older low income renters. The urgency of starting a new project amongst the demands of HAAG's main workload was the alarming reports by services about increasing housing difficulties being experienced by older people in the private rental market. It was also prioritised due to 2010 being a year with elections at the state and federal levels. The June Snapshot Project has involved preparation of a short survey that was distributed to a range of housing welfare organisations across Melbourne. They were asked to fill in the survey during the month of June to gain a snapshot of the number and type of cases being found by the agencies that involve older people in housing difficulty. The response was overwhelming with nearly 500 cases put forward. This vital information will be collated into a report that will be released as soon as possible.

Specialist Retirement Villages Training

On the 27-28 April 2010 HAAG was responsible for the presentation of a special project to ensure that HAAG and Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) has access to the best training possible for staff assisting residents in retirement villages. HAAG contacted Rob Phillips QC who developed a training module after an initial meeting with HAAG and Consumer Affairs Victoria. The training was conducted at Ross House and about 20 staff from HAAG and CAV attended. This specialist training was particularly aimed at staff who are directly providing assistance to retirement village residents and was the first time that staff had been offered the opportunity of training from a recognised expert in the industry. It is hoped that such training will become a regular opportunity for advisers to update their skills and discuss particular cases and trends that are arising.



The Eastern Region Independent Living Units Project

HAAG has been working on a retirement villages project in the eastern region of Melbourne that is focusing on the not-for-profit sector. To this stage HAAG has distributed letters, contact information about HAAG and CAV's retirement villages rights booklet to 1300 residents. Requests were made in our letter for residents to contact HAAG to participate in a survey to find out what issues residents have. A very low level of responses has been received and steps are being taken to doorknock a number of random sites to elicit comment from residents. Due to the onerous requirements of contacting residents in a large region this project has been extended to the end of 2010. HAAG also wrote to all the housing providers of villages in the region and only two responses were received. The purpose of the letter was to establish the legal status of the housing that they manage to ensure that we distributed the correct rights information in the mail (RVA or RTA). Overall HAAG has raised more questions than answers so far in this project. For example, is there widespread apathy in the sector among providers and residents? Does it reflect a lack of interest in connecting with the wider regulatory environment in a somewhat insular type of housing microcosm in the community? Is there a general fear of engaging in rights and responsibilities as set down in law? If this is the case, what are the expectations of residents and providers? Are the not-for-profit retirement villages a last vestige of a bygone era where church-based welfare organisations operate within a benevolent structure where management hold unquestioned authority and residents feel beholden to them? Are there many problems that residents are afraid

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to refer to external agencies or is there a widespread air of contentment? HAAG will need to investigate this sector more closely to begin to get answers to these questions. This process will continue during the second half of 2010.

Important meetings, talks and presentations

- The five major government departments HAAG has had regular contact with over the year have been Consumer Affairs Victoria, the Office of Housing, Department of Planning and Community Development, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing and the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
- HAAG met with the Minister for Consumer Affairs and adviser Andrew McDonald on the 10th September 2009 to discuss reforms for caravan and residential parks. HAAG arranged for residents from three parks and villages to attend and present their case directly to the Minister. The Minister provided an hour for discussion of our concerns.
- HAAG has met with Consumer Affairs Victoria staff at many levels including participation at quarterly Working Together Forum meetings with the Director of Consumer Affairs and meets regularly with a range of staff including the Enquiries Centre, Residential Accommodation Strategy, Residential Accommodation Team, regional staff and liaison officers.
- HAAG attends the Retirement Villages Co-ordination meetings on a quarterly basis with Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria and Council on the Ageing and also meets quarterly with Consumer Affairs program liaison staff Jennifer Abreu and Jen Stokes.
- HAAG continues to contribute to the Residential Accommodation Strategy Caravan and Residential Parks reform process. HAAG has been in contact with CAV policy staff for this area on a regular basis including Sevgi Kilic, John Unkovic and Thu-Trang Tran.
- HAAG has regular contact with Andrew McDonald, Adviser to the Minister for Consumer Affairs. Andrew occasionally contacts HAAG to obtain our view on an issue and we have very thorough and robust discussions.
- HAAG has begun work on a retirement villages project in the eastern region and has met with CAV Regional Manager Vivien Smale to collaborate on this.
- HAAG has continued to liaise with the Department of Planning and Community Development who are doing work to re-make the Caravan and Movable Dwellings Regulations of the Residential Tenancies Act.
- HAAG met with Anne Congleton and Rocco Fonzi from the Office of Housing on the 11th August 2009 to brief them about HAAG's submission to the Options Paper: Tenancy policy framework for residential parks. Regular contact is maintained with these key policy staff from the Office of Housing as they are in collaboration with CAV on the reform process.
- HAAG has continued significant engagement with the Commonwealth Government on reforms tackling homelessness and has corresponded with the Minister, Tania Plibersek and key policy staff such as Kate Gumley who is co-ordinating implementation of the government's White Paper on Homelessness.
- HAAG attended and gave a presentation at the National Housing Conference in November 2009. HAAG's participation enabled contact with government representatives from a number of states in Australia.
- HAAG met with the Minister for Housing, Richard Wynne, on the 11th February 2010 and two of his advisers on two other occasions to discuss the Residential Tenancies Bill on residential parks.
- HAAG wrote a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Public Housing (see attached)

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and presented it to the Parliamentary Committee on the 11th February 2010.

- HAAG met with the Minister for Consumer Affairs on the 10th March 2010 and the Minister's adviser Andrew McDonald on three other occasions as well as having a number of phone conversations with the Minister's office on particular points and processes regarding the impending Residential Tenancies Bill on residential parks.
- HAAG met with Geoff Turner, Manager of Housing and Building Policy, Department of Planning and Community Development on the 15th March 2010 regarding the re-making of the regulations to the Caravan and Movable Dwelling section of the Residential Tenancies Act, for which HAAG provided a submission.
- HAAG met with Kate Gumley, Branch Manager of the Homelessness Taskforce, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) on the 24th March 2010 to discuss the needs of older private renters.
- HAAG met with Deb Tsorbaris, Director of Community Engagement at the Department of Human Services to discuss the needs of older people facing homelessness
- HAAG met with senior representatives from the Department of Aged Care on the 15th April 2010 as they were conducting a review of their policies and were seeking HAAG's views on the needs of older people.
- HAAG met with Wendy Lovell, State Opposition Housing Spokesperson and Michael O'Brien, State Opposition Consumer Affairs spokesperson on the 9th June 2010 regarding the Residential Tenancies Bill on residential parks.
- HAAG met with Preston MP Robin Scott with residents from Summerhill Residential Park about the Residential Tenancies Bill on residential parks.
- HAAG attended the Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria Conference on the 22nd April 2010. This provided an opportunity to gain valuable insights into the retirement villages industry and the perspectives being presented by a number of key stakeholders. This year's event also had an interesting research focus and some matters were clarified by CAV regarding residents rights to take cases to VCAT.
- HAAG has continued to meet on a regular basis with representatives from Council on the Ageing, in particular policy officer Deborah Parnell and co-ordinator of Seniors Information Victoria, Kris Spark. These meetings are used for information sharing and collaboration on vital issues.
- HAAG has continued to convene an Older Persons Housing Advocacy Network that brings together local government and community agencies that specifically focuses on the housing needs of older people on low incomes. The network met on two occasions over the 6 month period and this provided the basis for lobbying the state and federal governments over homelessness and tenancy matters. Of particular note was the decision to hold two major activities to highlight the problems faced by older private renters: Conduct an agency snapshot survey of older private renters during June, and, organise a major two day conference in 2011 to highlight the range of older persons housing issues across all tenure types.
- HAAG gave a presentation at Homelessness Victoria's launch of the national Parity Journal, in which an article by HAAG was published on the needs of older private renters. Held at the Melbourne Town Hall to an audience of 100 representatives from community agencies, our film on the experiences of older private renters was shown and a talk given.
- HAAG attended and gave a presentation at the International Federation on Ageing Conference in Melbourne from the 3-6 May in Melbourne and networked with a wide range of organisations internationally and from across Australia.
- HAAG has established contact with a national network of organisations under the umbrella of Homelessness Australia. On the 23rd June 2010 HAAG participated in a teleconference to initiate the development of a workshop on older persons housing to be conducted the day

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before the National Homelessness Conference being held 2-3 September 2010. HAAG is also giving a talk at the conference on the second day of the event.

- HAAG's Caravan and Residential Parks Working Group has continued to meet on a monthly basis and has now grown to more than 140 residents from parks and villages across Victoria. The group met very frequently during the six months and intensively through June 2010 as we increased our lobbying for law reform. This included a number of meetings with the Ministers of Consumer Affairs and Housing and their representatives. They wrote a letter to every Member of Parliament in Victoria seeking their support for HAAG's position on the reform of the legislation.
- HAAG has continued pro-bono support from Middletons Solicitors who have assisted with our submission to the Department of Planning and Community Development on changes to the caravan park regulations.
- HAAG has contact on an occasional basis with the Tenants Union of Victoria, Victorian Council of Social Service and a number of community based housing support organisations such as Homeground Services, Community Housing Ltd., Housing Choices Australia, Southern Cross Care and a range of aged care agencies such as Aged Care Assessment Services.
- HAAG met with the Caravan Parks Association to negotiate over industry impacts on older residents.
- HAAG met with the Victorian Public Tenants Association to discuss issues facing older private tenants in a privatising sector.
- HAAG maintains contact with local government representatives in a range of forums including HAAG's Older Persons Housing Advocacy Network, the Housing and Local Government Network (HALGN) and policy exchange on a number of individual levels.
- Three meetings with Victorian branch of Health & Ageing re Intake Services
- Inner South Community Health Service re. HAAG's services
- Housing Options presentation at Bass Shire Forum
- Participated in Victorian Law Reform Commissions review into Guardianship
- Met with Senior Rights lawyers re. HAAG's services and referral process
- Multiple meetings with four of the Social Housing providers re. their building plan and process for referring clients
- Radio debate with TUV's Policy Worker on the privatisation of public housing
- Training session for Citizens Information Centres in the Southern region
- Housing information session South Melbourne Senior Citizens Centre
- Talk on social housing to Northcote public tenants
- Talk on HAAG and Housing Options to Holden Street Neighbourhood House
- Participated in the Carlton public housing redevelopment 'Bring Down the Wall' campaign
- Worked with Albert Park public tenants on potential Climate/Heat forum
- Met with VCOSS and Centre for Sustainability on potential Climate/Heat forum
- Presented at WAYYS housing service on HAAG and referral protocols
- Met with Brimbank City Councillor re. HAAG and Local Government Housing Policy
- Information session at BSL Coolabah Centre on Housing Options
- Meeting with Northern Region Victims of Crime regarding HAAG services
- HAAG conducted the monthly radio program Raise The Roof and was a guest on the program City Limits and North Yarra Community Health Service on 3CR
- HAAG wrote articles for the Victorian Branch of the Association of Australian Social Work magazine, the Ross House Bulletin and submitted information to the Seniors News
- Information Session/Presentation to Residents of Pelican Shores Residential Village
- Presentation at Peninsula Community Legal Service services information forum at Glenvue Caravan Park Rye

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- Presentation to Statewide Aged Care Assessment Teams meeting; City of Darebin Aged and Disability Network; City of Whittlesea Aged Services Network; Bundoora Extended Care Aged Care Team; residents of Sunny Sands Village Inverloch; residents living in Tarwin Lower; Congregation at the Unitarian Church; Sunbury Police and Community Representatives; Social Work Aged Services Interest Group; Nurse Educators in Merrijig; and Case Managers based in Mansfield Hospital.
- Publicity was generated in the following publications: Letters to The Age, Parity Journal, Sunday Age, The Age, Inverloch Star, Emerald Hill Times, The Seniors News.

Ease housing stress

QIVAs flood rightly alerts the community about the cost of an ageing society (The Age, 23/1). However, governments can ameliorate the impact of higher health expenditure and anticipated lower tax revenue. There is an urgent need for adequate housing for older people on low incomes. This number has doubled to 112,000 in the past five years. Ensuring they have adaptable, appropriately designed and well-located housing linked to community services can enter the "ageing well" process and avoid "housing poverty", which causes ill health and permanent entry to residential care.

An older person's housing plan at state and federal levels is required.

Also, before we accept the argument that older people will become an expensive burden, do not forget that many contribute thousands of volunteer hours every year, helping to keep many services operating. *Valerie Hillier, chairman, Housing for the Aged Action Group, Melbourne*

NEWS

Support group wants tenants to have a say

BY RICHARD PERRY

A 2001 support group for aged public housing tenants is calling for a new model of public housing to be developed to address the needs and problems associated with our ageing population.

Housing for the Aged Action Group will work with the federal housing commission and community housing organisations to address the needs and problems associated with our ageing population.

In the Victorian Integrated Housing Strategy released last month, the state government has agreed to create a "national network of public housing units to accommodate need".

SHAG housing adviser Paul Hynes reported the new public housing units could be targeted at public housing properties with limited access to community housing agencies. SHAG hopes to urge the federal government and encourage public housing agencies to proceed. "There are large people who comprise the new public and state-subsidised housing," he said.

He says that the new model would mean that there will be a shift away from a model of housing provision with one management of

public housing properties. Local housing trusts would manage the units at 20 per cent of a tenant's income, compared with 25 per cent in public housing. The new SHAG will also set up a national network of public housing units to address the needs of our ageing population at the state level.

SHAG says that a public housing unit will need to be designed to meet the needs of our ageing population. It will need to be designed to meet the needs of our ageing population. It will need to be designed to meet the needs of our ageing population.

"This is a good thing in a sense because it is a change of attitude," he says. "It is a change of attitude that will be needed to meet the needs of our ageing population through public housing and other services."

Housing for the Aged Action Group will work with the federal housing commission and community housing organisations to address the needs and problems associated with our ageing population. "It is difficult for public housing to be designed to meet the needs of our ageing population," he said.

Stability urged for movable home residents

Residents of movable homes in Victoria are urged to remain stable in their homes as the state government considers a new model of public housing. The Housing for the Aged Action Group is calling for a new model of public housing to be developed to address the needs and problems associated with our ageing population. The group is calling for a new model of public housing to be developed to address the needs and problems associated with our ageing population.



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HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

WHAT IS HAAG?

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) is a member based organisation that works towards housing justice for older people on low incomes in Victoria.

HAAG offers free and confidential advice to older people renting their home.

There are six main parts of our service:

*** Private Rental**

Retirement Housing Advice & Support

*** Housing Options Service**

*** Intake and Outreach Service - Care & Housing**

***Community Education &Community Development**

***Policy Advice**

Interested tenants and residents are encouraged to join

Pensioners No Charge

So ring us on 9654 7389 (Melb. metro.) or 1800 637 389 (country callers)

Address: 2nd Floor Ross House 247-251 Flinders Lane Melbourne. 3000.

Check out our website: www.older tenants.org.au