

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

Older Tenants' Voice Since 1988

SPRING September 2012



***HOUSING -
A RIGHT, NOT A
PRIVILEGE***

**HAAG IS ON
RADIO 3CR**

'Raise the Roof'
Wednesdays once a
month at 6pm

855 on the AM dial

Next shows:
26 September
24 October
28 November



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

Hello to all HAAG members and friends!

Well another year has nearly finished and soon the AGM will be upon us.

What an exciting, busy year it has been for HAAG, with confirmation of funding received from the Department of Human Services for the Home at Last project. This means we have had an increase in HAAG staff, from 5 HAAGies to 13 HAAGies.

Hopefully members will attend the AGM to meet all of the staff.



Congratulations to Jeff and April for all the work they have undertaken to secure the funding and also to Ani for her finance work.

The CARPAV working group had a forum in July which was successful, with residents from around Victoria attending. Congratulations to all who organised it.

While on this subject Shanny acquired funding from the Victoria Law Foundation to do research on residents committees in caravan and residential parks and villages. Janet Reid was employed to do the research and what a great result has come about from it, with the launch of the report held in August sponsored by Mornington Peninsula Shire.

Congratulations to all HAAG staff for their hard work and now with extra staff on board HAAG will be a very busy hub for seniors and housing.

Welcome to all new staff and we hope you enjoy your time here.

Wyn Stenton

Chairperson HAAG committee of management

PHOTO ON FRONT COVER:

MOLLY HADFIELD, HAAG'S FOUNDING MEMBER, ON HER 90TH BIRTHDAY

HAPPY 90TH BIRTHDAY MOLLY



Birthday celebrations



HOME AT LAST (HAL)

Introducing HAL's Angels

Intake and Referral service

Home at Last will provide free, confidential information and advice for older persons regarding long term housing options appropriate for their needs. Three Information and Referral workers began their employment in June and July this year and have been actively involved in setting up the new program.

Megan Baker commenced employment with the Home at Last service in June after working in Community Health. Megan has completed tertiary studies in Psychology and Social work and has worked as a case manager with Community Aged Care packages and Home and Community Care services, as well as residential aged care, mental health and general medical nursing.



Left to Right: Tegan, Megan, Anne, Melis

Anne Maher started with the Home at Last service in July and is enjoying the diversity of her role. After returning to study in 2005 Anne completed a Social Work degree and worked briefly as a case manager at the DHS before joining Elder Rights Advocacy and working as an Aged Care Advocate for 5 years.

Tegan Leeder joined the Home at Last team in July. Tegan has a background in intake services for financial counselling and has worked at the State Trustee's. Tegan has also volunteered in disability services and aged care and has just completed a Diploma of Community Services Case Management. Referrals to the Intake team can be made by phone and appointments are available to discuss your concerns face to face with an Intake worker, or if you're in the city feel free to drop in and meet us.

Home at Last Information and Referral service - telephone: 1300 765 178

Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged - Outreach

My name is **Melis Cevik** and I am the new Outreach Worker for the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged program (ACHA) at Housing for the Aged Action Group Inc. I joined HAAG about two weeks ago as a full time employee.

I am Social Work trained and have worked in a variety of positions as a homeless/ domestic violence crisis outreach worker, respite coordinator for children with disabilities and team leader for Aged Care Team Leader for a number of different local councils. I have been working in the aged and disability services sector for the last eight years and I have found that working in the Aged and Disability sector has been the most valuable experience to date so I continue working in this sector. Beside my work life, I am a mother of 16 year old twin children (girl and a boy), who keep me very busy with their schooling as well as their out-of-school activities including soccer, basketball and dancing.

I am very excited about this position at Housing with the Aged Action Group as you all would agree with me that HAAG is highly committed in advocating for the rights of older residents to access secure and affordable housing. It also seeks to ensure that those rights are translated into real and meaningful outcomes.

Training and Protocols

Hello everyone my name is John McMillan. It's a pleasure to be on board here at HAAG, in my role of Training & Protocols worker in the Home at Last Program. Over the past few weeks I've got to know some of the HAAG members, and have been interested to hear of the dedicated work that they have been involved in over the years.



As Training & Protocols Worker my work will be to support the housing system to be more responsive to older people's housing needs, so that a high level of referral networking exists between Home At Last Services and external agencies. The aim is to liaise with the community agencies that have contact with older people, to improve on the ways that people in housing difficulty are referred to HAAG. By developing training for community agencies, and building effective working relations with referring agencies, the aim is to establish quality client assistance systems that benefit older renters.

I am looking forward to meeting more of the many people connected to HAAG- members and supporters. I would be very interested to hear about people's experiences of the housing system, especially what has worked for them, and any suggestions about improvements.

Tenancy Support

Hi, my name is Marc Westley and I am the new Consumer Affairs Vic funded Tenant Support Worker for HAAG. I have had the pleasure of working with Jeff and Shanny in my previous position within the Tenancy Support Team at Peninsula Community Legal Centre, particularly in relation to work with Residential Park residents living on the Mornington Peninsula.

I'm excited and privileged to be a part of such a dedicated and switched on team at HAAG and hope to carry on the great work Jeff and Shanny and April and Kaye and Ani have delivered to the community over the years, particularly in relation to appropriate and dedicated support, assistance and advocacy for older tenants in private rental who may be going through housing difficulties.



So, if you, or a neighbour, or somebody you know is having a tenancy issue in their private rental housing, if you have received a Notice to Vacate or need to break your lease or get a repair done or if you've received a breach notice from your landlord or a rent increase you think is too high, if you're having trouble getting your bond back or have a VCAT hearing or if you just want to know more about your rights under the *Residential Tenancies Act*, then ring up the office for a confidential chat.

Community Education

The two Community Education workers, Gemma White and Fionnuala Spillane are about to embark on their huge task of spreading the word about Home at Last Services across Victoria. The program aims to reduce the risk of homelessness to older people through prevention and early intervention.

The Community Education duo will visit community groups and communities of interest (such as Kooris, people with disabilities, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and intersex communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities etc) to talk about Home At Last services. The Home At Last service will provide older tenants information about housing options and supports, so that they know who to approach for assistance to find more affordable, safer and well maintained housing, to avoid a housing crisis.



Top to Bottom: Gemma, Fionnuala

The community education program also aims to make Home At Last more visible to the public. Fionnuala and Gemma have begun producing new leaflets, banners, cards and posters etc. with other HAAG staff and management to promote Home at Last, which you will get to see in coming weeks.

In order to promote Home At Last and share the wide range experiences and talents of HAAG's members, the Community Education team are also putting together a travelling art exhibition showcasing the work of people who have experienced housing stress. Members of HAAG have previously contributed to workshops delivered by workers, and Gemma and Fionnuala are keen to hear from people willing to give their first hand experience of accessing HAAG for support to gain secure, affordable housing. Please see our letter, inserted in to the newsletter, for further details and contact us on 1300 765 178, we are looking forward to hearing from people who would like to contribute work to the exhibition and/or are available to speak at Home At Last presentations.

Do enjoy arts and crafts?

Would you like to help spread the word about HAAG?

Then we want you!

HAAG's Community Education Workers, Gemma White and Fionnuala Spillane are about to begin promoting the Home At Last service around the state. They will be conducting talks and seminars with groups of older people and the staff providing services to them.

Gemma and Fionnuala would like to assemble your arts, crafts or writing to form a travelling exhibition that will bring the experiences of HAAG's members to the public. All kinds of works are welcome .

See the letter included in this Newsletter for further details on how to contribute.

CLAN Network

This is an article from the CLAN website. CLAN stands for Care Leavers Australia Network and they are a network for people who grew up in Australia's orphanages, Children's Homes and in foster care.

Close to half a million children in Australia in the 20th century were brought up in 'care': as state wards, foster children or Home children raised in orphanages, Children's Homes, and other institutions, and in foster care. Many of these people are now middle-aged or older but still carry the burden of unresolved issues from this past.

Many are afraid to tell their friends, even their children, that they were in the care system because of the stigma it carried. Many were cut off from all contact with family members, and are still looking for them.

Most left the care system without any preparation or assistance for adulthood or for parenthood. Many are left with the scars of emotional deprivation and neglect, and of physical, sexual and psychological abuse.

We are the forgotten survivors of a past child welfare system which deprived us of a sense of identity, of self-worth, and of a rightful place in our society.

We have been silenced because there has been NO recognition or support for people in this situation. Until now.

Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN) is a support, advocacy, research and training group for people from this background. We help everyone, including Australians who grew up in orphanages and Homes overseas. There are almost no services for older Care Leavers provided either by governments or by the agencies which ran Homes in the past.

CLAN's objective is to raise community awareness of our issues, and to campaign for government assistance to redress them. Being raised without your family has lifelong implications that require lifelong support services. CLAN can provide information, understanding and emotional support.

We publish a bi-monthly Newsletter sent to all our members containing articles and contributions from our members and others, and other items of interest like

Members' personal stories

Information on how to access your ward file

Details of any support and counseling services

How to locate lost family members and friends

Details on the progress of the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care

Books in our library which can help and inform

Some of this information can also be found on this website. For more information about CLAN, please call 1800 008 774 or 0425-204-747 or email support@clan.org.au.

HAAG Annual General Meeting

Thursday 11 October 2012

10:30am till 12pm

Followed by a light lunch

GUEST SPEAKER: Shelley Mallett - Hanover

ENTERTAINMENT: Lotus Performance Group

*Housing for the Aged Action Group 2012 **FORUM SUMMARY***

Securing Our Future:

Retirement in Residential Parks and Villages in Victoria

Security of tenure and resident/management relations focusing on regional and rural Victoria

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) held a state-wide forum on the future of caravan and residential parks and villages on 12 July 2012. It was a successful event hosting over 70 attendees from around the state, including representation from Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) and the parks industry.

The purpose of the forum was to bring together members from HAAG's caravan and residential parks and villages (CARPAV) working group who are usually unable to attend meetings. The forum saw representatives attend from parks and villages as far away as Mildura, Echuca, Cobram, Lakes Entrance and Inverloch, and from places as varied as Leopold, Hastings, Mornington, Nagambie and Yarra Junction.

The forum looked at the two greatest concerns for residents: security of tenure and resident/management relations. After the introduction of Part 4A in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, providing some improved protections for people who own their moveable dwelling and rent/lease the site on which it stands, residents felt it fell short of their expectations and did not address their key areas of concern. The forum aimed to revisit these topics by presenting alternative models of management and security. It also aimed to empower residents, through the use of residents committees and the residents' voice, to work together and be proactive in their approach towards reform.

Our guest speaker was David Bunce, from the University of Adelaide, who has a Masters by research in relocatable homes and is currently undertaking a PhD about housing co-operatives including residential park co-operatives. David spoke about why tenure changes are necessary, the consequences of inaction and how changes can take place using examples from the UK and the US.

David offered ways of creating change that will provide security, such as:

- Separate the long term, permanent residential parks and villages from the tourist parks, to ensure business owners have a purpose.
- Allow residents the offer of first refusal to buy a park/village if it is being sold.
- Rezone parks/village land as residential to be used only for permanent housing.
- 10% commission for park/village owners for on-site sales as the trade off for long term security for residents. The 10% is the highest that owners can charge.
- Support resident owned co-operatives with government loan guarantees and support by not-for-profit trainers.

David encouraged a positive 'you can do it' attitude by suggesting that what is needed is a champion to take on the cause and pave the way. This then became a theme throughout the rest of the day where people agreed that someone needed to take the lead and pursue the cause to achieve reform.



Our first panel discussion addressed the topic of resident/management relations. The panel consisted of:

- Elizabeth White, CEO, VIC Parks
- Anne O’Hehir, Residential Tenancy Program Manager CAV
- Keith Sykes, Manager Residential Accommodation CAV
- Ben Cording, Solicitor Tenants Union Victoria

Although different perspectives were expressed throughout the panel discussion there was a respect and understanding that grew out of the opportunity to hear what each side was saying. Elizabeth presented the industry perspective and explained the role of VIC parks which is to inform and advise park/village operators. CAV provided the neutral eye from experiences working with both sides. Ben provided the legal expertise and expressed liveliness about residents exercising their rights. It also began what HAAG hopes will be a continued conversation between residents, and their representatives, and industry towards an improved relationship model for parks and villages.



An entertaining presentation was then given by Janet Reid, HAAG’s project worker for the residents’ committee project funded by the Victoria Law Foundation. Residents’ committees provide a united approach for residents working through park/village issues and also encourages a pro-active approach to improved relations with management. Residents’ committees are an example of a positive strategy residents can use to improve their experience living in a park/village, and its success can depend on whether there is support and acknowledgment from management which again looks at the significance of positive relationships.

To bring together the topics of the day a panel discussion was also held in the afternoon and was made up of residents who had developed strong residents’ committees in their parks/villages and who may have also established more positive relationships with management.

The discussion involved the whole audience and looked at documenting recommendations for future action HAAG could take that came out of the days’ presentations.

This panel discussion was followed by a short talk by Gary Martin, state president of the Affiliated Residential Parks Residents Association (ARPRA), who was in attendance with his two vice-presidents. Gary shared with the audience the hard work and successes obtained by ARPRA and encouraged the idea of a champion. He spoke in way that inspired the audience to want to be pro-active in their approach and create the reform they seek, rather than wait for it to happen by someone else. He said *‘sharing information is the greatest tool in getting change’* and that successful lobbying is done quietly, diplomatically and respectfully.

Recommendations from the day:

Security of tenure:

- A joint approach – strength in numbers
- A national level approach – engage with MP’s

Resident/management relations:

- Look at legislative change
- Encourage collaboration
- Protocols between residents and managers/owners

Residents’ committees:

- Use the findings of the project to lobby for change
- Encourage collaboration
- Assist to inform and educate
- Continue documenting residents’ committees
- Gather together committees in regions for support and action



Residents' Committees Building Bridges in Parks and Villages

The results of a project documenting the benefits and barriers of residents' committees for retirees in caravan and residential parks and villages will hopefully assist to improve relationships between residents and operators in parks around Victoria.

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG), with funding from the Victoria Law Foundation, created the project out of a need to inform older residents in parks about their right to form committees in response to changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. In September 2011 Part 4A was introduced into the Act improving protections for permanent parks residents who own their dwelling but lease/rent the site on which it stands.

HAAG, in conjunction with the Mornington Peninsula Shire, launched the project report on Tuesday 21 August 2012 to present what residents, operators and stakeholders feel is needed to support stronger relationships in parks, allowing for a more inclusive living environment.

Janet Reid, project worker for HAAG, focused the project in the Gippsland and Southern Metropolitan regions, with a large number of parks from the Mornington Peninsula represented. "It is important to get dialogue happening because at the end of the day both residents and managers/owners want the same thing, to have amicable, clear communication that enables a positive living environment", says Janet, "Residents Committees can help provide the pathway for that to begin".

The aim of the project was to document the values of, barriers to and resources needed for residents committees in parks and to provide a balanced view of the sector in relation to these areas. The project has found that residents and operators are actually not far apart in their vision for the future. HAAG's hope is to act upon the conclusions from the project to generate strategies that will empower the parks sector towards a new culture.



L to R: Jeff, Cr Frank Martin, Ken Dyson



L to R: Janet, Wyn, Gemma, Melanie Rygl

The report sets out the findings from the project, along with recommendations for further strategies to strengthen committees and their relationships with park managers and owners.

HAAG is interested in continuing this work and hopes to be able to inform and support residents all across Victoria to form residents' committees.

Project recommendations:

- Training for park/village managers and owners
65% of people interviewed during the project felt training for managers and owners was needed.
- Training and support for residents committees
There is a need to inform and educate residents state-wide
- Mapping of parks/villages to identify how many permanent residents there are state-wide and where
- The legislation needs to acknowledge residents committees as legitimate entities able to act as a collective
- There is a need to formalise dispute resolution procedures for parks/village to guide clear communication.

If you would like a copy of the report or if you are interested in knowing more about how to form and run a residents committee in a park/village please contact HAAG on 9654 7389.

Right: 3 members of the Mornington Gardens interim residents committee

Below: report launch audience



We are excited to share that HAAG will be presenting at 3 conferences with varying audiences over the next few months. This is a great opportunity to raise awareness, on a national level, about the services that HAAG's offers to create a national profile.

National Homelessness Conference—September 2012

Jeff will be discussing the development of Home at Last and showing preliminary data collected by the service that provides details about the problems experienced by older Victorians at risk of homelessness, along with an analysis of the processes involved in achieving housing outcomes.

7th National Housing Conference—October/November 2012

HAAG has 2 presentations at this conference.

- Jeff will again be presenting information in relation to the Home at Last service.
- Shanny will be presenting the findings and recommendations from the 'Residents Committees in Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages' project.

45th Australian Association of Gerontology National Conference—November 2012

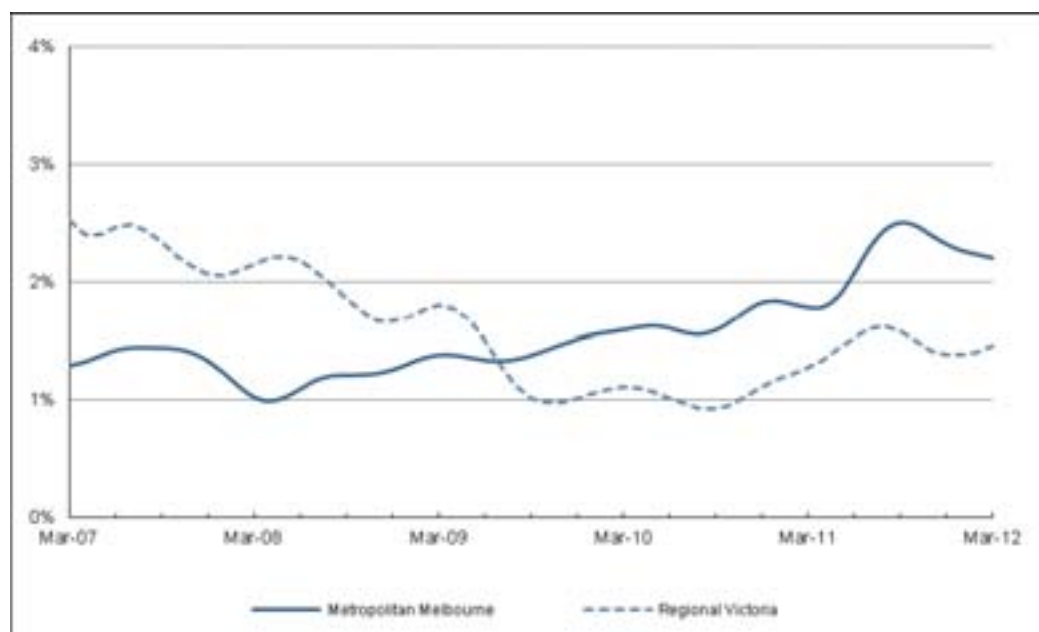
Jeff will be presenting information in relation to the Home at Last service at a forum focused on aged care and aged support services.

Rental Report shows difficult housing market

Continued low vacancy rates have made conditions more tenuous for older private renters and what is particularly worrying is that this trend has been the norm for the past five years. As stated in the most recent Rental Report produced by the Department of Human Services “the metropolitan vacancy rate has remained steady over the past quarter. For March 2012 the trend vacancy rate was 2.2 per cent compared with 2.3 per cent in December 2011 and 1.8 per cent in March 2011. The regional vacancy rate has also remained steady over the past quarter. For March 2012 the trend vacancy rate was 1.5 per cent compared with 1.4 per cent in December 2011 and 1.3 percent in March 2011.” It is recognised that the equilibrium point where there is enough supply of housing to meet demand (and therefore have enough places available and keep rents down) is a 3% vacancy rate. With this trend availability will continue to be tight and rents will rise above inflation.

The Rental Report also states that “rental affordability in Victoria continues to be low and the proportion decreased further this quarter. Across the state 18.7 per cent of all new lettings were affordable, a slightly higher rate than in the March quarter 2011 (17.9 percent). Metropolitan Melbourne continues to register very low levels of rental affordability at 9.5 percent, a decrease on the December quarter 2011 (10.6 per cent). The proportion of affordable rental lettings in regional Victoria continues to fall. In the March quarter 2012, it was 54.4 per cent, compared with 56.6 per cent in the December quarter 2011. The proportion in the March quarter is lowest recorded since the September quarter 2002.” Lower cost private rental housing is even harder to obtain for people on aged pensions because property managers are rejecting their applications as they are seen as being a higher ‘risk’ compared to middle income earners.

The chart from the Rental Report below shows the vacancy rates over the past 5 years and demonstrates the poor state of private rental housing in Victoria. It also suggests that there is a chronic shortage of rental properties and while vacancy rates have increased slightly you can see that they remain well below the 3% threshold, particularly in regional Victoria.



SENIOR'S FESTIVAL:

Home at Last - Housing Options

The **Home at Last Service** at Housing for the Aged Action Group invites older people who live in insecure, unsafe or inappropriate housing to attend an information session.

Monday 8th October 11.00am to 2.00pm
3rd Floor Meeting Room between 11.00am to 2.00pm

OR

Thursday 11th October 2.00pm to 4.00pm
4th Floor Meeting Room between 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

Location: Ross House, 247 – 251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

The **Home at Last Service** encourages older people to plan ahead and maximise their knowledge of housing options that may be suitable to them. We will have resource materials available and our tenancy and housing workers, along with people we have directly assisted, will be able to provide housing information and advice on a personal level.

- Free event. Tea and coffee will be available
- No need to book, informal information session, chat one-on-one with our workers.
- If you require a translator to be on-site, please call us on 03 9654 7389 to advise of language required. Please provide 7 days' notice for a translator.
- Screening of film 'Ageing on the edge – the housing journey of three older renters' will be screened at 11.15am, 12.15pm and 1.15pm on Monday 8th and at 2.15pm and 3.15pm on Thursday 11th.

"Ageing on the Edge" is a short film about the stories of older renters in Melbourne who achieved affordable and sustainable housing outcomes through the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) program.

Housing for the Aged Action Group continues to work towards Housing justice for older people.

If you have any need to contact us, please telephone 1300765 178 or 03 9654 7389 and we will assist you.

If you would like to let us know about your park or village, or you have a story or experience to share in relation to your housing, please send us your contribution for our Summer newsletter.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: SUMMER EDITION — December 2012

Articles due 23 November

Send articles to: 1st floor, Ross House,
247-251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, 3000

Or email: shanny.gordon@oldertenants.org.au

A long time ago an American called Dr Abraham Maslow came up with a theory on Human Motivation. That theory, when first published, consisted of five categories and continues to provide inspiration for all kinds of organisations from modern business setups to daily care procedures in some American Hospices, and lots of school rooms and lecture halls in between ever since. Around the year 2000 a couple of people expanded the theory by applying three more categories because, they say, such categories need to be publicly acknowledged as necessary in the times in which we now live. Those expanded ideas will be shown here later for consideration.

Dr Maslow, a psychologist, well respected, has been dead a good few years now but his theory goes on being repeated and in some cases criticised. However, the design of his theory remains much the same, set out as it always was in a pyramid shape to encase the set of original five listings. The title of his work is always referred to as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (A Theory on Human Motivation). No prizes for guessing correctly that Dr Maslow sat and thought a lot about people and humanity in general; indeed he was officially called a Humanist.

However, when his famous theory was published the world wasn't displaying an aging population in his country, and in Japan, and in particular in Australia, to name a few. So does his theory fit the thinking for an aging population in Australia, in Victoria, in Melbourne, or even in your Retirement Village or Independent Living Unit (ILU) complex? You may be the judge.

Maslow starts building the pyramid of needs by suggesting the basic human needs at the base, such needs as water, food, air, sleep, warmth, shelter. After fulfilling such needs people move onto the second step, he suggests. Step two consists of security, stability, freedom from fear. Next, number three step, people seek connection with friends, family, spouse, or lover, to ensure belonging and love. After that the next step up is looking to achievement, mastery, independence, recognition, and respect. The final step – the peak of the pyramid – is to pursue inner talent, creativity, personal fulfilment, to strive to achieve self-actualisation.

An article in The Age (20/08/2012) showed a recent Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Report said 'physical comfort was a basic precondition for "feeling at home" and that householders faced 'psychological and health effects from having a lesser degree of control over their living environment.' Many people who live in retirement villages or ILUs can easily relate to these words, all of which sound like Maslow's original theory.

It is also true that physical comfort for one person may differ from that of their neighbour. So many Australians dearly love their pets, but are faced with being unable to take their pet with them if they need to live in an ILU or a retirement village. Some places often state restrictions barring children from having sleepover visits with resident grandparents. Neither such ruling would seem to fit Maslow's theory of needs for human motivation. However, these rules are entirely suitable for some people who prefer restrictions; people can and often do satisfy their needs for stability and freedom from fear in different ways.

Lately the ILU Working Group members have seen video and photographic examples of retirement villages and ILUs, in overseas countries and a few in Australia, that show social housing planned throughout to cater for the needs of the folk who live in the complexes. Such examples could have been planned by Dr Maslow himself given how well they are designed and built to cater for the whole person, whatever individual needs are necessary and where interaction is expected and enjoyed.

It is true that advertisements exist of highly priced corporate owned retirement villages that do supply everything, seemingly, related to the Hierarchy of Needs. However, so far only a few comparative examples exist in Australia for new social housing to accommodate the population of seniors, many currently threatened with homelessness, who can't afford the places in the glossy brochures. We can only hope that plenty more places like the examples we saw on video are planned. If so occupants will live within content in the knowledge their basic needs are satisfied and the choices for fulfilment in security, companionship, creativity, and shared activities are theirs to be enjoyed daily.

By Phyll Williams ILU working group member

Robin Hutton CARPAV working group member

Twelve months ago I was forced to sell my relocatable unit at the South East Holiday Village in Chelsea Heights due to the owners of the village wanting to redevelop a section of the land.

I was not alone. 17 others either had to sell or move their units out of the village which was very upsetting. We thought we would be able to live there for many years.

The owners never gave us long term leases and even now the owners of the units in the other part of the village do not know how long they will be able to stay there.

Only one section of the village is being redeveloped into a residential village where moveable units will be built on site and sold.

I am no longer living in the village. I now live in a unit owned by a housing association which is close to shops and public transport.

What I would like to see is owners and managers doing a better job looking after residents living in their villages and treating them with respect. I would like to see them give long term leases instead of just a few years.

The CARPAV working group I am sure will be doing a lot more to help those who live in villages as we all need somewhere to live as we get older.

I wish everyone who lives in a village the best and hope you are treated with more respect into the future.

UTILITY CHARGES IN CARAVAN AND RESIDENTIAL PARKS AND VILLAGES

The park where I live is charging a \$56.30 service fee every two months over and above the normal power usage bill. That makes up one third of our electricity account. We are unable to ask for another power company or their concessions as the owner is the sole provider. The service fee is charged against all 187 units in the park irrespective of whether the unit is occupied. The park owner will receive \$62,047 for 2012.

On 7 August 2012 in a radio interview Minister Michael O'Brien stated the service charge was for the maintenance of poles and wiring and that most houses outside of the park paid on average \$80 per year as compared to \$163 in the park.

My local member of parliament raised this matter before Parliament to be investigated by Consumer Affairs Victoria and three months on there has still been no response.

After researching this information and requesting information from the Tenants Union of Victoria I found out the park is entitled to charge this large fee as a service charge.

The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 states a site tenant is liable to pay all charges related to the use and supply of electricity if it is separately metered.

The Act also states the park owner must not charge more than the relevant supplier would charge. The Essential Services Commission set the maximum price levels which the park cannot exceed in their charges.

The maximum charges may vary depending on where a park is located and which provider supplies the electricity.

By Lionel Foster CARPAV working group member

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

1st Floor, 247-251 Flinders Lane,
Melbourne 3000.

ADMIN: 9654 7389

Home At Last: 1300 765 178

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HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

WHAT IS HAAG?

**Housing for the Aged Action Group offers
Free and Confidential Advice to older people renting their home.**

There are four main aspects to our service:

- *Housing options*
- *Private renters assistance and tenancy advice*
- *Outreach care and housing*
- *Retirement housing advice and support*



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

Interested tenants and residents are encouraged to join
Housing for the Aged Action Group
Pensioners No Charge

So ring us on: 1300 765 178 (cost of a local call on landline) or Admin (03) 9654 7389
Address: 1st Floor Ross House 247-251 Flinders Lane Melbourne. 3000.
Email: haag@oldertenants.org.au web: www.oldertenants.org.au