

"Change can only occur through strong political action in redressing the imbalance of power and resources." Edith Morgan

HAAG's 30th ANNIVERSARY

**Informing and supporting
older Victorians
since 1983**



Housing for the Aged Action Group

**Spring edition
September 2013**

HAAG SURVIVES ANOTHER YEAR

*Housing -
a right not a privilege!*





Cheers to all HAAG members.

How exciting to be celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the establishment of the HAAG organisation. We should express our gratitude for the foresight & persistence of the people who lobbied the Government at the time for an organisation such as HAAG, therefore providing a way to inform older people of their rights and to find appropriate safe housing.

There are two members who I am aware of being part of those early days of HAAG, they are Margaret O'Callaghan and the late Molly Hadfield, & all the past members of HAAG, a special thanks for the hard work. What a legacy to leave to the older community.

My own experience with HAAG was because of an unfair rent rise in the residential village I live in. HAAG was great not only to myself but to others as well giving support, advice & assistance to help at VCAT. The CARPAV working group was formed to try and improve conditions for older residents in this type of housing. The group lobbied the State Government for changes to the Residential Tenancies Act for Caravan Parks & Movable Dwellings. It took approx. 5-6 years before some changes were achieved (4A) but there is more work to be done to give residents security of tenure & in the long term separate legislation for all purpose built Residential Villages.

My time with HAAG has been exciting and productive, more so after I became a member of the committee of management (CoM). I have gained more knowledge regarding the housing problems that many older people face. There have been many changes, not only on the CoM but with staff. HAAG has gone from 6 staff to now having 13 staff.

You might ask why is this so? At the beginning of 2012 the State government provided funding for the Home At Last (HAL) project. What a steep learning curve it has been for the existing staff and the CoM: 1 Employing the extra staff 2. changes to the office setup. 3 New roles for the staff eg. Jeff & April (managers) & Kaye all the extra work (establishing new policies, teaching new staff and administration and data etc). As chairperson it has been challenging not only for myself but for the CoM members to form subcommittees and deal with the different aspects of the increased work load. Thanks to all involved for the input and effort everyone has given in the last 12 months.

Congratulations to all the staff for your dedication and work ethics to achieve: safe appropriate housing for older people in our community, a community education programme, tenancy advice & much more. The CoM would like to thank the Minister of Housing Wendy Lovell & the State Government for refunding HAAG & the HAL project until June 2015. This is very much appreciated!

This funding will provide more scope and hopefully better outcomes for older people in housing crisis. I would hope that more members of HAAG will be inspired to nominate for the CoM or become involved with sub committees that assist with the different areas of HAAG.

The CoM and I extend a special invitation to come to the AGM on the 21st Nov, not only to celebrate 30 years of HAAG but also the refunding of the HAL project.

SEE you there,

Wyn Stenton Chairperson

Our Annual General Meeting this year will be held on
Thursday 21st November – please put this date in your diary.

The original date for the AGM was 10th October but we have changed the date to enable us to have more of a celebration to celebrate 30 years of HAAG. There will be some amendments to the HAAG constitution in line with the new rule requirements for Victorian Incorporated Associations Act. Once we have finalised details we will be mailing you an invitation and a letter of the proposed amendments in the lead up to AGM.

This will also be our official 30th anniversary celebration and we look forward to sharing this special occasion with you!

Molly says Thank You

(Article HAAG Newsletter 1996)

My original contact with HAAG was in Frankston in 1987. Here I met a dedicated group who were lobbying the government of the day for more public housing and the introduction of two bedroom units for older people living in the Westernport area. At times they had to make many tough decisions, especially deciding to go statewide.

Things have changed since those days. I have had the privilege of working with a fantastic management committee, the best workers in the business, a network of service providers and many local supporters.

The committee and workers have shown creativity and innovation to attract further funding and I would like to thank the Office of Fair Trading for their continued support.

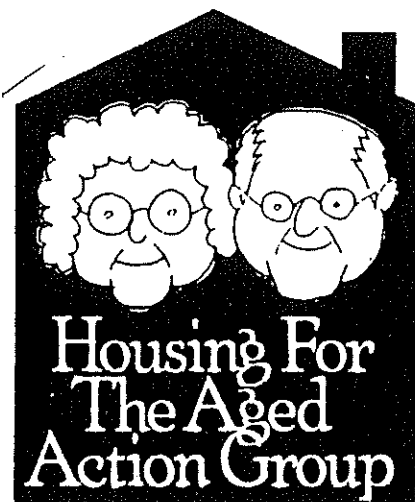
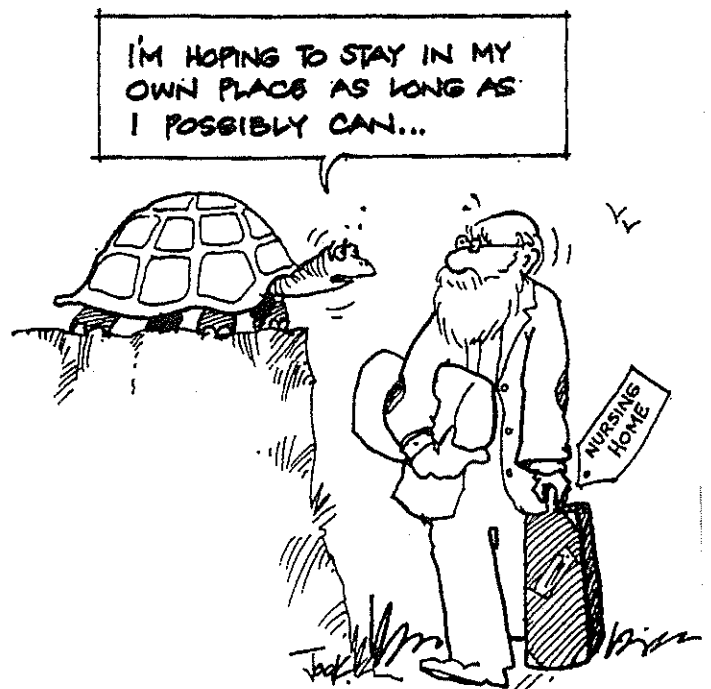
HAAG has been able to inspire other projects through various funding bodies and dollars have been found for research on community housing, housing options, and Aged Care and Housing Support. This has given HAAG the opportunity to provide further information to older people when trying to make informed decisions and choices regarding their housing needs.

HAAG must keep looking with optimism towards the future as a vital statewide body working for housing justice for older people who are tenants in rented properties. I trust the present government will maintain funding to the level of need.

In resigning my position, I would like to thank all past and present Committee members for their commitment and support and the workers for their drive, commitment and ideas. I would like to give special thanks to Bernie Duff who is truly an asset to the group with his clarity of purpose and his wide ranging skills. So, too, special thanks to Margaret O'Callaghan for all the encouragement she gave to me, and finally thank you to all the loyal supporters of HAAG.

Thank you, good luck and may the group continue.

Molly Hadfield.



1996 LOGO

POEM

You tell me I am getting old. I tell you that's not so. The 'house' I live in is worn out and that, of course, I know. It's been in use a long, long while; it's weathered many a gale, I'm really not surprised you think it's getting somewhat frail. The colour's changing on the roof, the window's getting dim; the wall's a bit transparent and looking rather thin. The foundation's not too steady as once it used to be; My 'house' is getting shaky but my house isn't me. My few short years can't make me old. I feel I'm in my youth. Eternity just lies ahead, a life of joy and truth. I'm going to live forever there, life will go on – it's grand. You tell me I am getting old. You just don't understand. The dweller in my little 'house' is young and bright and gay; Just starting on a life to last throughout eternal day. You only see the outside, which is all that most folks see. You tell me I'm getting old, you've mixed my 'house' with me!

Poem supplied by
Carmel McMennemin 1998

Early Days of HAAG

1998

The following letter was recently received from Pauline Bacon who has given permission for its publication in our newsletter. We wish Pauline all the best and hope that we have followed successfully in the tradition of the pioneers of HAAG.

"Housing for the Aged Action Group has come a long way since it started years ago.

It started with just four of us: Robyn Sutton from the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Cliff Gordon, my husband Eric, and myself.

I am delighted with the way the group is going. Both Cliff and Eric have died. Robyn and myself are not well.

Here's wishing all the members good luck. Keep up all the good work and **Never Let The Buck Stop**".

30 years of Activism-Then & Now

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG), began on the 21st. July 1983, following meetings between a self-help group of older activists and a few concerned workers. 4000 aged pensioners were renting, and there was a need for more and better Public Housing for the aged in the Peninsula area. The Westernport Regional Housing Council offered limited worker resources through the City of Frankston, and the Brotherhood of St Laurence. There were 525 older people on the waiting list, and 400 on the Brotherhood Southern Region waiting list. The problems facing older Private Renters were severe, such as the prospect of eviction, the need for two-bedroom units, and the long waiting lists. The Ministry of Housing's one bedroom policy was seen as being unfair, and impractical for the housing needs of many older couples. Unfortunately the demand for older person's accommodation exceeded the supply in the Westernport region. Bernie Duff and Molly Hadfield OAM as members of the Housing Council advocated for affordable and secure housing for older people. Molly Hadfield volunteered energetically and zealously for the community and

HAAG for 30 years, even up to the year of her death-2012. Two publications produced by Bernie Duff- "When the Buck Stops"-1984 & "The Buck Ain't Stopped"-1988 drew public attention to the urgent needs of renters on the waiting lists for housing in the Peninsula area. A Grant of \$5,000 from the Department of Community Services, Victoria afforded the employment of a worker (8 hours a week for 2 years), followed by a Grant for a Tenancy Support Worker (12 hours a week), from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs- Residential Tenancy Fund. In 1991, HAAG was funded by Consumer Affairs, as a State-wide Advice and Support service with one full-time worker - Bernie Duff. Housing for the Aged Action Group Inc. then relocated to Ross House, Flinders Lane Melbourne. Without the hard work and perseverance of its volunteers, and outstanding staff members, HAAG would not have advanced to what it has become in recent years. Jeff Fiedler, with 28 years of experience in Public Housing, and Local Government, has spent 17 years with HAAG. Jeff has served older people, not only State-wide, but nationally, as author of

many excellent articles and papers; and as a Speaker, Advocate, and Representative. April Bragg, also with a lengthy background in Housing, currently co-manages with Jeff- the Home at Last service, funded by the Department of Human Services. HAAG now employs a team of thirteen committed hardworking staff of Advocates and other professionals. In 2013, the Home at Last service received a Highly Commended Award, for prevention of, or early intervention in homelessness, from the National Homelessness Services. The contributions of 200 plus older people, focusing on the needs of older lower income tenants resulted in the publication of "Older Tenants Housing Charter"- November 2003. The Charter was necessary because radical changes were made to Federal and State housing policies over the preceding decade. Government had moved away from government provision of housing, to private/public Partnerships, the promotion of community/private options, and Housing Associations. Many HAAG members deserve individual recognition: committed older people with varied life experience, and occupations, from city and country, who generously volunteer their time, skills, and broad expertise. Their strengths complemented the efforts of dedicated professionals workers and advocates, and the arduous demands of the programs. HAAG members played key roles on Committees, Forums, reporting back to HAAG from other Committees, Expos, Seminars, Working Bees, city and country Information Days & Forums, and representation in their Local Districts. These selfless individuals include:- Carmel McMennemin, Pat Black, Margaret Wayman (Shepparton), Marie Bellett, Denise Muir, Brian Beyer, Elizabeth Coldicutt, Evie Wallace (Latrobe Valley/Mornington), Sarah Lawrence, Sheila Byard, Pauline Cross, Joan Maxwell, Ray & Tess Easy, Ken Dixon, Frances Swann, Alma Wang, Feng Yin Xia, Pat Barron, Wyn Stenton, Darlene Salisbury, Bob Purves (Bendigo), Max Penaluna, Amy Duncan, "Siva" Nallaratnam, Marian Foster, Maree Norris, Johanna Tierney, Phil Slattery, Edith Morgan OAM, Pat Jackson, Nancy Farley, Doreen Rushby, Margaret Dopfer, Molly Hadfield OAM, Melva Harris, Katie Kyne, Denis de Costa, (Stawell/Ararat), John O'Dea, Sharon Martinkus, Glen Metzke, Bruce Pritchard, Bruce Sanderson, Pauline Sturgess, Sue Healy, Ena Ahern, Bill Singleton (Wodonga), Bob Brookes (Yarra Junction), Helen Ohloff (Healesville), Pauline Williamson, Richard Tait, Jack Farrar, Sol Gottlieb, Ron Akers, Mark Greer (Echuca), Arthur Larsen, Joan Allen, Jack Stuart, Gladys Maher, Wilfred & Joyce Wilson, Jean Henderson OAM. Despite the fact that the need for affordable and

secure rental housing has grown significantly, the Federal Governments reduced expenditure every year since 1986. Varied and minimal responses to appeals from HAAG have been received from Federal and State Governments. Victoria is the only State or Territory Government in Australia not funding a state peak body for tenants and housing advocates. The "indefinite" and "segmented" waiting lists for Public Housing are forcing many older (often frail) people into the insecure, unaffordable (sometimes sub-standard) Private Rental market. Weekly rents average 50% to 70% of their aged pension. Funding shortfalls for HAAG's ongoing programs are addressed by appeals to philanthropic groups and Trusts which include: the Lord Mayor's Fund; the Reichstein, Myer, Stegley, & Jack Brockhoff, Foundations, and Helen McPherson Smith Trust. Limited, small short-term grants are generously granted by them. In 2009, the outcome of a major state-wide consultation with older people living in Caravan and Residential Parks was a new Part 4a of the Residential Tenancies Act in 2010 which specifically addressed the needs of this group, and the Legislation passed by the State Parliament. In 2010, Consumer Affairs funded a Retirement Information and Support Service, when HAAG restructured its housing and homelessness services. In 2011, HAAG hosted a most successful national forum - "Ageing on the Edge" - Older People at Risk of Homelessness- 200 delegates attended. Many older people share my opinion that the Victorian Government should continue to own and manage its large housing portfolio. The preferred housing options for vulnerable older people are public and social housing. All Governments can impose taxes, or borrow money for infrastructure projects. Governments are a better credit risk than the private sector, and are fully accountable to the electorate for use of public money. Government funding priorities should be adjusted: less of tax-payers monies spent on supposed revenue raising major sporting events and frivolous entertainment; more funding and resources to neglected, more deserving sections of the Victorian public. Ongoing funding for a State-wide peak body for tenants and housing advocates is vital to service the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society. Maybe, the HomeAtLastservicecurrentlyfundedbytheDepartment of Human Services is a step in the right direction!!

Margaret O'Callaghan OAM
HAAG Member 1983-2013

THEN AND NOW

Have the headlines changed over 30 years?

What about those 86,000 uncomplaining Victorians over 55 years who rent their accommodation and whose prospects of securing public housing fades away!!

1996

HAAG FUNDING THREAT

1996

**HUGE
PUBLIC
RENT
RISES**

**Push to
transfer
public
housing**

Apr 16.8. 2001
By CHLOE SALTAU
SOCIAL POLICY REPORTER

ACHA FUNDING THREATENED 2004

HOUSING OPTIONS URGENTLY REQUIRED 1996

**MINISTER
ATTACKS HAAG** 2004

CARAVAN PARKS CAMPAIGN

HAAG is currently engaged in a campaign to improve the conditions of caravan and residential park residents in Victoria.

2005

¹⁹⁹⁶
Elderly renters 'at risk'

²⁰⁰⁰
Older Women & Domestic Violence

²⁰⁰⁰
PRIVATISING PUBLIC HOUSING

¹⁹⁹⁷
End of an Era - Public Tenant Groups Defunded

Bullies in Positions of Authority

2003

Bullies are not only to be found in school grounds. Older people as well as children are vulnerable to this situation. I am referring to some Retirement Villages where this occurs.



HAAG NEWS

What made news over 30 years?

SAVE OUR FUNDING 2005

The Public Housing Advocacy or PHAP program was first funded in 2000 to provide advocacy, advice, referral and support service to all current and prospective public housing tenants. It is also funded to assist with the development of networks to assist with understanding and communicating issues concerning low cost housing and to inform the general public and government departments. The program is funded through the Tenant Participation and Advocacy unit of the Department of Human Services.

In a meeting with Human Services last month we were informed that some specific organisations funded through the Public Housing Advocacy Program would have to compete for funding through a submission process as a consequence of the PHAP review conducted late last year.

The Commonwealth Department of Housing & Regional Development, in cooperation with the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health will hold a conference to climax the "New Homes for Old Program"....

The conference will address the issues and challenges, responses, solutions and opportunities of our ageing population. The New Homes for Old Program aims to develop policies and strategies to increase older people's awareness of and access to a diversity of housing options, and to improve the industry and government responses to providing appropriate housing for an increasing number of older

The recent election of the Labor Government brings new hope for tenants in Victoria. With a stated commitment to review policies such as the segmented waiting list and the broad-band allocation system and an end to public housing sales, we hope that some balance is restored which will provide a more humane approach to assisting older tenants.

1999/2000

*Give back the funds
to tenants*

**HOUSING AN AGEING SOCIETY
THE CHALLENGE AHEAD**

Community Housing

Housing for the Aged Action Group through its Assistance and Care and Housing for the Aged Project has sought help for older people in housing crisis with approaches to various church and community managed independent living units for the elderly. Unlike public housing which has a wait turn system of allocation, community housing is accessed on a needs basis determined by the management body. The majority of occupation is obtained by the payment of a voluntary contribution.

Problems which arise with this option are :

-no comprehensive list available as they are not listed with any government body

-each organisation has its own terms of agreement which can be quite long and sometimes not easy to understand.

-there is no general policy on allocation

-there is no dispute resolution process

-generally there is no personal assistance as management require certification that the potential resident can live independently

The general tone of the respondents to the phone-in was one of anxiety and vulnerability, although many people were happy with their lifestyle.

If the government is considering a review of the legislation Housing for the Aged Action Group suggests independent living units be included as a separate study, for appropriate legislative safeguards to be assured.

Stop Press

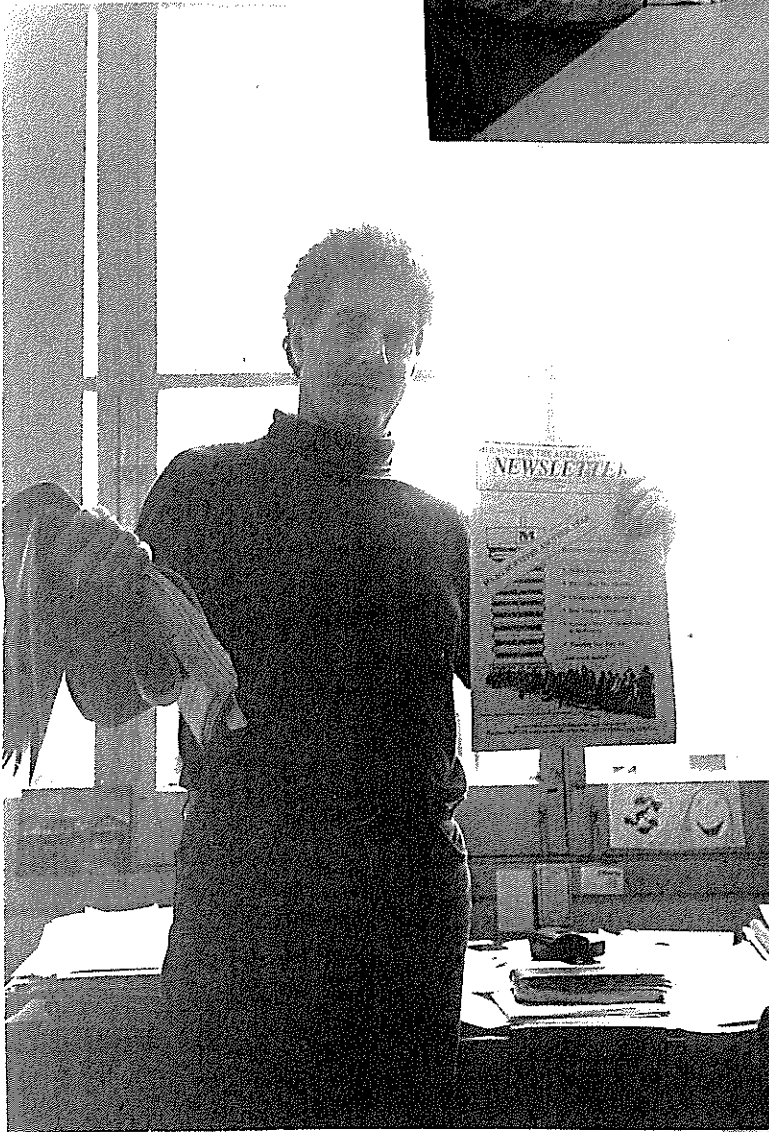
We have just heard that from January 1 1998 applications to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal are rising from \$10 to \$25 !

How is a tenant on a pension supposed to afford that?

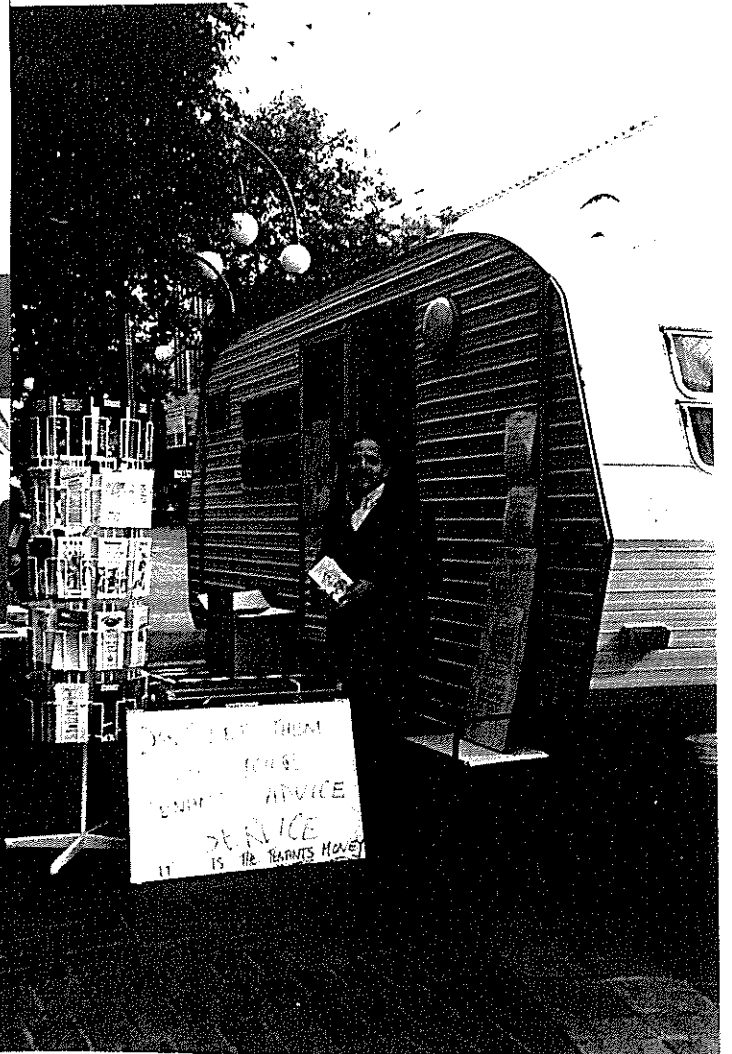
Caravan and Residential Park Residents Action

The Caravan and Residential Park Residents Statewide Working Group has been campaigning hard over the last few months for law reform for their housing. The working groups has been meeting about every two months and has also formed a sub committee that has been doing a great deal of detailed work identifying the dozens of issues of concern to residents and proposing where changes need to be made to current laws. 2006 8.

1990's ←
Staff +
Committee Members



→ Jeff holding a 1996 newsletter
that inspired our 30th
anniversary front cover!



1993 ←
Bernie Duff
Bourke St Information
Stall

Country trips ←
with Jeff and
Peter Sibly



STATEWIDE CARAVAN & RESIDENTIAL PARKS FORUM



Jeff Fiedler (HAAG),
Jenny Mikakos
(Member for Jika Jika,
Parliamentary
Secretary, Justice),
David Imber (Tenants
Union) and Lionel
Foster (Summerhill
Residents Action
Group)

Dalene Salisbury,
HAAG Chairperson,
Molly Hadfield
(HAAG committee
member) and Amy
Duncan (HAAG
member), dancing
with the Minister
for Senior Victorians
Gavin Jennings, at
Government House
after the Victorian
Senior of the Year
Awards 2005



Has anything changed?

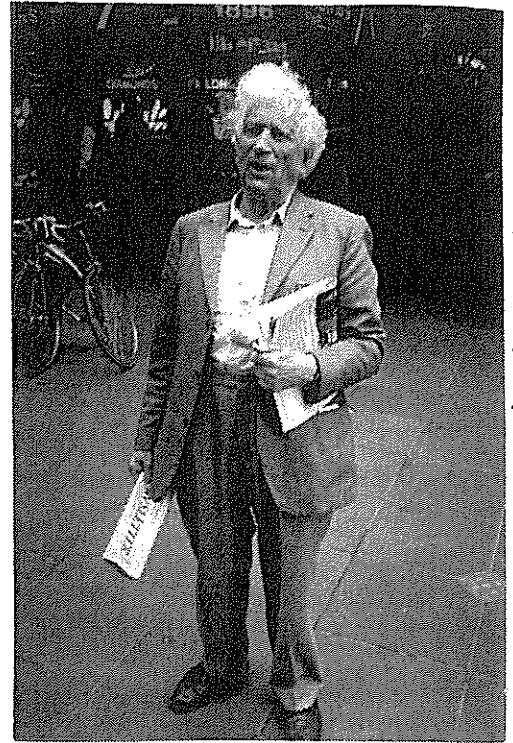
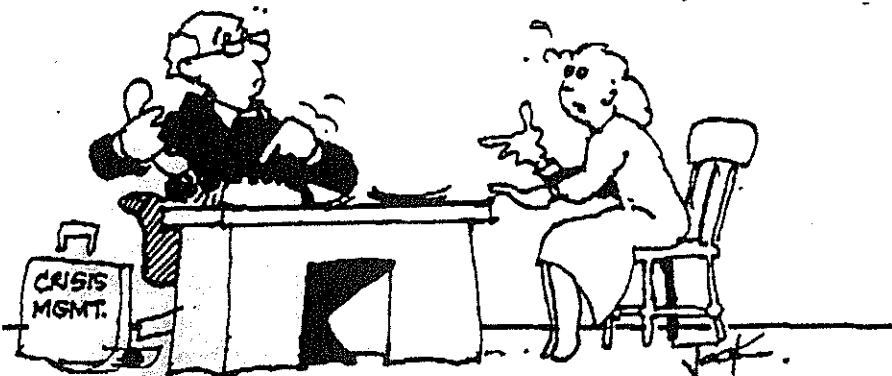
The times they aren't a changing

From the time we arrived in Melbourne in 1923 to the time we left in 1936 we rented seven homes, driven mostly by grasping landlords forever raising the rent. When we returned to England our first landlord was typical of the breed. When the front room's window let in the rain and snow, it took him weeks to get it fixed. But he got his comeuppance—when the declaration of war was imminent the government froze all rent and tenancies. Shortly after this we received a notice that our rent was to be increased. We ignored the letter and heard no more about it. It was fortunate for us and many other people that the government prevented landlords ejecting tenants or we should have undoubtedly joined the many people seeking accommodation in 'safe' areas. We lived in Kenilworth which was five miles from Coventry. It was only hit by one bomb which landed just around the corner from our place and demolished some shops and killed several people.

So it seems that the experience of tenants we often hear about these days are no different from the past. This shows that real reform is long overdue.

J.F. 2000/2001

ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN IN A HOUSING CRISIS FOR TEN YEARS...



JACK FARRER



2003 - 2013

Public Housing waiting lists compared

Victoria's top FIVE public housing waiting lists by region at March 2003

Southern Metro (includes Dandenong, Frankston):	12,683 (1242 priority)
Northern Metro (includes Broadmeadows, Collingwood, Richmond):	7773 (1232 priority)
Western Metro (includes Sunshine, Footscray, Flemington, Ascot Vale):	6275 (981 priority)
Eastern Metro (includes Box Hill, Ringwood):	4723 (498 priority)
Loddon Mallee (includes Bendigo, Mildura, Swan Hill):	1733 (248 priority)

The Waiting Times for this same period in the remaining four DHS regions is as follow

Barwon South West (includes Geelong, Portland, Warnambool):	1570 (197 priority)
Gippsland (includes Bairnsdale, Morwell, Sale):	1018 (128 priority)
Grampians (includes Ballarat, Horsham):	811 (128 priority)
Hume (includes Benalla, Seymour, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Wodonga):	1295 (230 priority)

Applicants on the Public Housing Waiting List as at June 2013:

Southern Metro	9093 (2226 priority)
Northern Metro	13,425 (4618 priority)
Eastern Metro	4295 (1203 priority)
Loddon Mallee	1858 (520 priority)
Barwon South West	2496 (684 priority)
Gippsland	1407 (313 priority)
Grampians	1210 (284 priority)
Hume	1924 (655 priority)

STILL SO TRUE...

SAVE PUBLIC HOUSING

1996

12.

Older Persons Housing Policy Issues

2002

Through HAAG's Public Housing Advocacy Program (PHAP) we have established a process of regular meetings with representatives of the Executive Director of Housing & Community Building and with the Minister's Office. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss housing issues of concern to older tenants in Victoria.

At our most recent meeting, HAAG put forward several proposals for policy changes which would benefit current and prospective older public tenants.

1. **Automatic Priority for older people:** *those applicants who reach the age pension qualification age should be eligible for automatic priority for public housing;*
2. **Housing stock size allocation:** *Older people should have the choice of bed-sitter or one bedroom accommodation and better access to two-bedroom housing for elderly couples;*
3. **The development of an Older Tenants Housing Unit within the Department of Human Services and Office of Housing;** to undertake a specific review of existing policy and to develop policy and forward planning on older tenant issues.

Home, home at last !

Hello, my name is Luise-yes different spelling. Back in February, I had the good sense to walk through the door of HAAG. I am now living in appropriate accommodation for a woman of my age. My new home is so much better than I dared hope for. It is small but adequate to my needs. My new mantra is 'downsize!' My new abode is one of cluster of older persons' units with a ramp to the front door instead of steps. Presently I am cycling my bike up the ramp! My neighbor one side is 90 years old and on the other 68, the next resident all of 78. So I have a ways to go here.

What are some of the highlights from the first three weeks of my new life? Waking up and seeing the suns rays flood the little kitchen, opening the back door to the aged care communal cat scratching on the door demanding admittance, getting a good nights sleep because of living in a quiet street, having a good neighbor, Leonie, who helped me with getting the mechanics of turning on the hot water and gas stove. And my neighbour lending me a saucepan to boil water in till I had the energy to unpack boxes and locate my own kettle.

The expression 'glass half full/half empty' struck me the other day-I was actually struck by something, but I will get to that in the last paragraph. I am a convert to the glass half -full school as a result of this new address. I am living ground floor, with an established garden back and front, there are trees-cherry blossoms, lemon trees, even a wattle-and all for 25% of my income. What I am getting for 25% is a good deal although there is considerable alarm at public housing rents increasing from 23% to 25% in recent years. And when you are on a fixed income 75% of a pittance doesn't go very far. So I am looking for work. The glass half empty feeling is: I don't like the bathroom without a bathtub, and in the same room as the toilet and laundry. Then there is the problem of totally inadequate built- in cupboards in kitchen, bedroom and utilities room. The solution is to buy some furniture and some of those cheap as metal shelving for the kitchen. And to shed what I don't need and to acquire what I do need like more bookshelves. And to have only the essentials plus an extra glass, cup, plate etc for visitors. Already I have had visitors 'dropping by.' And here I am supposed to be talking about glass half empty. I can't stay on it for very long because the positives certainly do outweigh the negatives. And I never thought I would be saying that, especially in the Third Age !



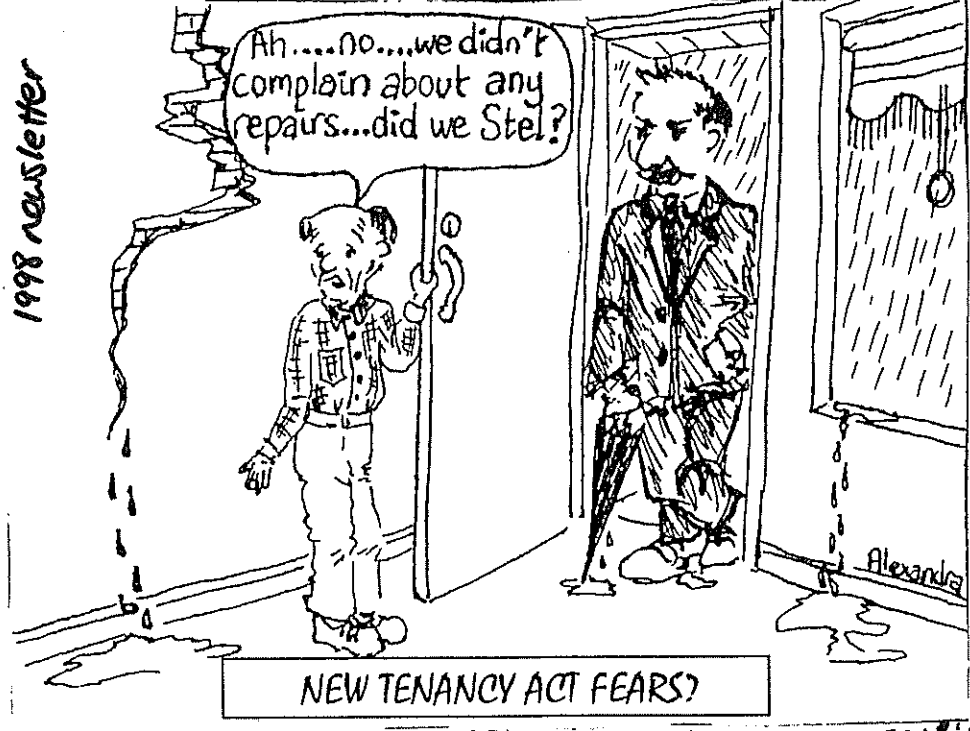
1999 newsletter

GOOD NEWS!!

Home at Last has been refunded.

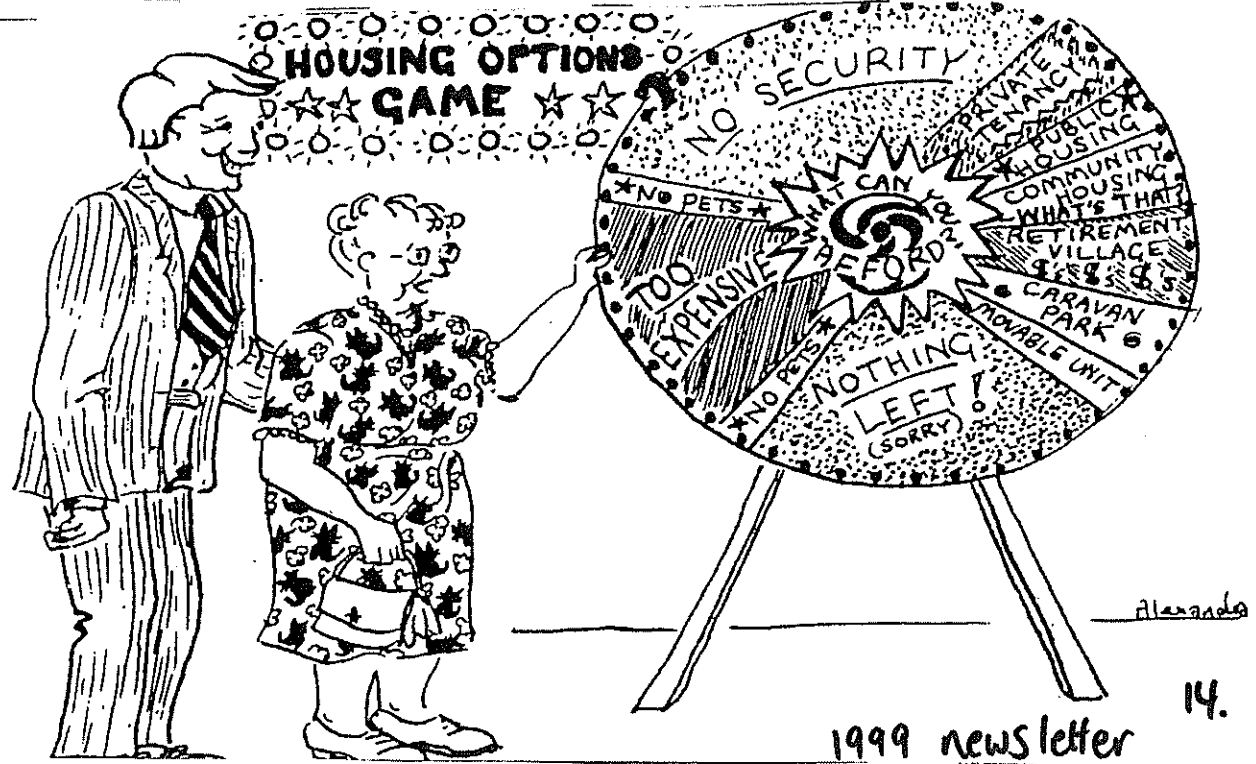
Department of Human Services has informed HAAG that the Home at Last service will be funded until JUNE 2015.

Thank you to all of our members for your support during the stressful waiting period and to the staff for your patience and hard work!



1998 newsletter

NEW TENANCY ACT FEARS?



1999 newsletter

Charter of Older Tenants' Rights

The process to develop HAAG's "Older Tenants' Housing Charter" spanned back to 2000, when, through the financial support of numerous Philanthropic Trusts, we embarked on the "Having Our Say" series of regional forums to discuss housing needs and concerns with older tenants across Victoria. These ideas were further developed at the Having Our Say statewide forums conducted in 2002 and again in 2003. From there, several General Meetings of HAAG's members further refined the draft Charter and its unanimous adoption at HAAG's AGM makes it the benchmark for appropriate housing and support standards for older tenants - today and into the future.

The significance of HAAG's Older Tenants' Housing Charter lies in the fact that this is a statement by older tenants - articulating what is required to address the housing needs, particularly of low-income older tenants. As such, it should become the basis on which housing providers design, construct and manage affordable rental housing for older tenants.

The main aspects of the Charter are:

Affordable

Older people have the right to accommodation where the cost is not a financial burden.

Available

Older people have the right to access a range of housing options and accommodation types that can be obtained within a reasonable period of time.

Accessible

Older people need housing that is purpose designed for suitable access and is adaptable as a person ages.

Security of Tenure

Older people should have the right to secure tenure for as long as that housing is their preferred option.

Well – Maintained

Older people have the right to a home that is maintained in good condition, to a modern standard, with appropriate health and safety features.

Energy Efficient Design

Older people have the right to housing that is designed to provide a healthy environment, save energy and minimize a person's ancillary housing costs.

Location

Older people have the right to live in housing that is located in their chosen community, close to services and public transport.

Linked Aged Care Services

Older people have the right to live in a community that has appropriate aged care services available in the home and in residential care if they require it.

Linked Housing Advocacy Services

Older people have the right to free and accessible housing advocacy and support services that are independent of government.

Tenant Participation

Older tenants need to be recognized as valuable contributors to the development of legislation, policies and procedures on issues that affect them, and this participation needs to be recognized as a fundamental right resourced by government.

*Excerpt from 2003 HAAG
newsletter*

WHY WE NEED A STRONG PUBLIC HOUSING SYSTEM (2005)

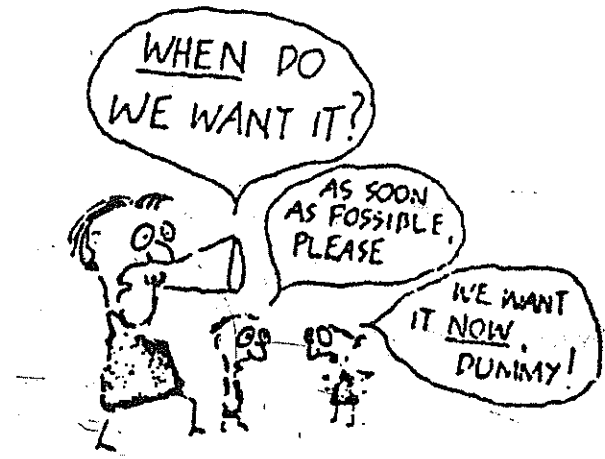
Public housing has been the cornerstone of affordable housing in our state for over 50 years. It provides over 62,000 households with:

Affordable rent. For many older people is the difference between eating and affording necessities such as medication. Security of tenure. A home for as long as you want it.

Accessibility. Public housing is accessible and accommodates people regardless of economic or social background.

High quality public housing is of a modern standard, with appropriate health and safety features for older people.

Control. The public housing system is the only housing model that provides an opportunity for tenant input into design and management of their housing.



VICTORIAN SQUATTERS UNION MARCH 1984

In Memory of Past Significant Supporters

There have been many amazing people who have been members of HAAG over the past 30 years and this has been the core strength of the organisation: Older people who have been activists all their lives and are dedicated to social justice.

Edith Morgan died on the 10th of March this year aged 85. For many years Edith was a great inspiration to all at Housing for the Aged Action Group.



Edith was on our Management Committee for six years and was always the first person asked to be a keynote speaker at our annual statewide forums.

Edith is remembered by our organisation as a tireless campaigner on a range of human rights issues and she saw public housing as one of the central platforms of this aim. Edith would come into the HAAG office at least once a week. Everyone would drop what they were doing and we'd have a cup of tea, usually also with Edith's close companion and HAAG founding member Mollie Hadfield. Edith would want to know the latest goings on in housing, what issues we were concerned about, and whenever we had a dilemma about a problem she would always have a clear perspective on how we should deal with it. Edith's support and direction for our organisation gave us enormous confidence and stability.

Edith also made it clear that the housing privatisation plans of federal and state gov-

ernments was a dangerous exercise that threatened the basis of housing justice: that is public housing. She believed that any politicians who supported the sale of, or diminished role for public housing had sold out the community and she would express her view with appropriately colourful language.

It was also the case that whenever HAAG's funding was threatened that Edith guided us through the difficulties because she believed that HAAG is an important organisation that must survive to continue our vital work.

While we saw Edith as a great asset to us and felt very proud that she belonged to our organisation, it wasn't until we attended the celebration of her life at the Collingwood Town Hall that we realised the magnitude of her contribution to the community over her lifetime. Her involvement and leadership in many campaigns and causes has been quite extraordinary.

Edith Morgan

Excerpt 2004 HAAG newsletter



Edith and Mollie

RUTH CROW

One such amazing person was Ruth Crow (1916-1999). Whilst being a member of HAAG Ruth worked in a wide range of community activist fields all her life such as women's rights, environmentalism and town planning.

In recognition of the Crow's lifetime of achievement the City of Melbourne unveiled a memorial plaque in the Australian Native Gardens, Royal Park on 16th September, 2000.

The plaque's inscription reads:

"Commemorating the lives and work of Ruth and Maurie Crow. Activists in social and environmental planning. They inspired, guided and encouraged our communities in seeking to make a better world."

Amongst other achievements was the donation by Ruth and Maurie Crow of approximately 2000 books and 700 pamphlets to Victoria University in 1990 and is housed in the Special Collections room of Footscray Park Campus Library. This has become to be known as The Crow Collection and is an invaluable source of information to educate current activists in Melbourne.



Ruth's activist principles when campaigning for housing justice:

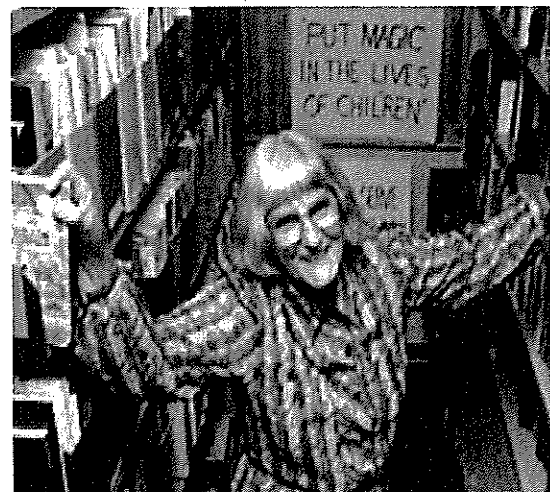
*Shelter as a basic human right - a vision of Australia and the world where homelessness was unknown.

*Housing realities - facts vs 'choice' where economy, not lack of moral fibre or 'choice' led to loss of home or accommodation.

*Build alliances based on shared values - how building broad community coalitions can create solutions to expressed needs.

*The power of one and the power of ten - where common vision and values are crucial.

*Building on the past - draw on history and past stories to add value to current campaigns.



OLD FOLKS ARE WORTH A FORTUNE

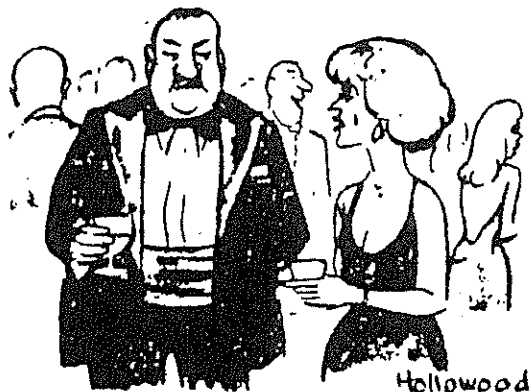
Old folks are worth a fortune: With silver in their hair, gold in their teeth, stones in their kidneys, lead in their feet, and gas in their stomachs

I have become a lot more social with the passing of the years; some might even call me a frivolous old gal. I'm seeing five gentlemen every day:

As soon as I wake, Will power helps me get out of bed. Then I go and see John. Then Charley Horse (leg cramps) comes along, and when he is here, he takes a lot of my time and attention. When he leaves, Arthur Ritis shows up and stays the rest of the day (he doesn't like to stay in one place very long, so he takes me from joint to joint). After such a busy day, I'm really tired and glad to go to bed --- with Ben Gay (hot water bottle).
What a life.

P.S. The preacher came to call the other day. He said that at my age I should be thinking about the hereafter.

I told him I do -- all the time. No matter where I am - in the parlor, upstairs, in the kitchen, or down in the basement - I ask myself, "Now what am I here after?"

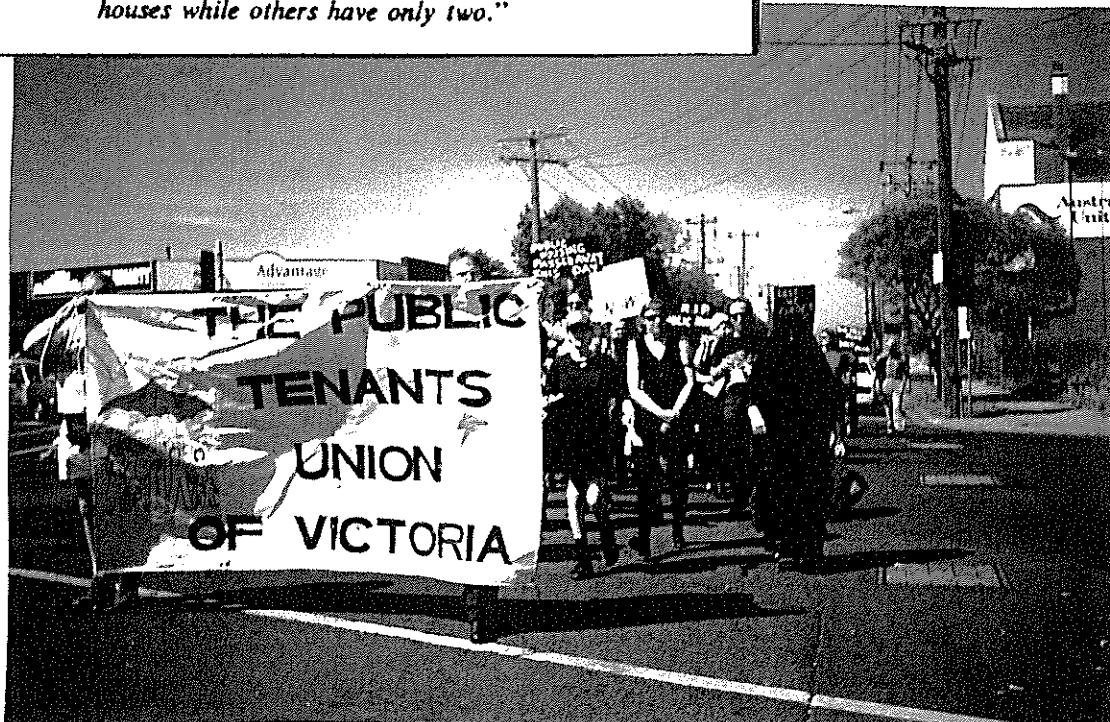


"What's so wrong and unfair is that some people should have three or four houses while others have only two."

Listen to HAAG on:

Raise the Roof
3CR
855am

September 25
October 23
November 27



Current members and supporters share their stories

I first became involved with HAAG in February 2009, when I was in Melbourne house-sitting for friends. Although I grew up in Melbourne and returned here to live in 1986, when I retired from work in 1993 I decided to find a warmer winter climate and moved to Brisbane.

The winters were lovely but the summers were playing havoc with my breathing (I was later diagnosed with emphysema). In addition, I was living in Public Housing where my next door neighbour kept accusing me of trying to kill her (as you do). I decided it was time to return to Melbourne and that I would make some enquiries while I was here house-sitting. I rang the Office of Housing (OOH) in Cheltenham to check on waiting lists (which were even then, very long), however, they gave me HAAG's number and I followed it up with a phone call. A lovely Irish voice answered my call and I found I was speaking to Ena Ahern, who promised to send me some information on what was available, where and at what cost. And boy, did she – reams and reams of housing information – I became a member of HAAG on the spot!

Meanwhile, back in Brisbane, my neighbour's behaviour continued and she began to involve the local Police and the OOH. As no-one seemed willing or able to do anything about it I rang Ena in Melbourne and asked for HAAG's help.

Ena phoned around her many HAAG contacts and found me an Independent Living Unit in Surrey Hills which was about to become available. I flew down to Melbourne, took a look and decided that, even though it was expensive (rent was 50% of my pension) it would have to do as I was so desperate to get away from what I found an impossible situation. I moved in in April 2009. In the meantime HAAG submitted an application for OOH for me. In October 2010 due to the efforts of April Bragg (HAAG in action again!) I was "selected" to become a tenant in a brand new OOH complex – very modern and stylish, handy to shopping and public transport – I thought I had a home.

Alas, it was not to be – I had barely moved in when I received a visit from the tenant upstairs who complained about the noise I was making

"hammering" every night. I denied this, he complained to the OOH but his complaint was rejected. So he began an 18 month campaign of pelting my balcony with eggs, pouring oil under my front door and slashing the door with a knife. The local police were powerless, and the Office of Housing said it was "not their problem" (sound familiar?). My local MP wrote several letters to the Minister, still no action. I went to the Magistrates Court for an Intervention Order and the Magistrate awarded me a 2 year Intervention Order (which the tenant ignored). Time to call for the "cavalry" from HAAG, this time in the person of April who took up the fight on my behalf, battling the local OOH and finally resorting to their Senior Management in an effort to get an agreement for my transfer out of a potentially violent situation.

In the middle of all these negotiations, the local OOH decided to take the tenant to VCAT in an effort to get him removed for causing damage to the property! Despite the evidence of the local Police, my testimony and the fact of the Intervention Order granted by the Magistrates Court – WE LOST!

Finally, much to my relief, April was able to prevail upon OOH Senior Management to affect an immediate transfer. Not only did April succeed where everyone else had failed, HAAG were generous in their financial assistance with my moving expenses. I am now busily unpacking and setting up my new "home" – maybe not as "stylish/modern" as my previous one, but a comfortable unit in quiet, pleasant surroundings with my own little garden (front and back) AND (sheer bliss!) my own CLOTHESLINE!

I remain a member of HAAG and will continue to support them (as they have supported me) and help out where I can (pass the envelope!!). I am now a member of the Management Committee, as I feel that is another contribution I can make to repay them for all they have done for me.

Becoming a HAAG member in 2009 was the best thing I could have done (had I known it!). Now for the first time in my life, I truly am "Home at Last".

Pauline Williamson

Thanks to the help your organization offered, we found a Home at Last. Our lifestyle changed tremendously for the best, in the following ways:

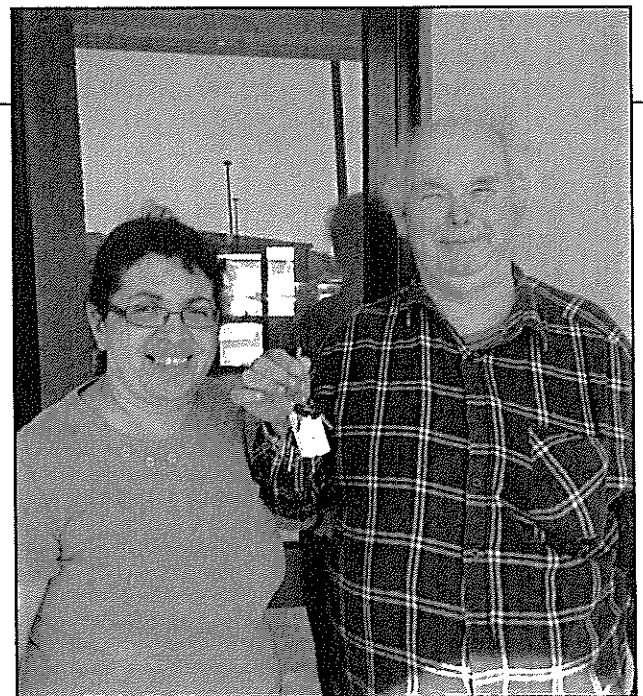
- 1) We have more space, by having more rooms.
- 2) It is safer to have a shower and not worry about falling through the floor.
- 3) We have secure environment by having a gate.
- 4) We enjoy peace and quiet, since we don't have to listen to loud music, or hear people screaming and shouting.
- 5) Mail box is close to us, and therefore accessible.
- 6) We don't have to walk far to the rubbish bin.
- 7) We have space for a washing machine, and thus not forced to use Laundromats.
- 8) It is warm in the winter inside the apartment most of the time, and we have more cupboards and wardrobes to keep our personal items clean and free of dust.
- 9) We can use a few electric appliances at once without worrying about the electricity going off.
- 10) We don't have to put up with water being cut off, and the uncomfortable consequences.

Our life in the Caravan park we lived in prior to this was completely different:

- 1) The shower was too small, and after ten years became unsafe to use.
- 2) In winter it was too cold, and we had water leaks. As a result we suffered from flues and colds more often.
- 3) We had to walk far to the office to get our mail, and walk far to the rubbish bin.
- 4) During summer it was too hot.
- 5) Some of the neighbors used to get drunk sometimes, fight and shout, and even break things. Thus it was an unsafe environment.
- 6) We had to put up with loud music from inconsiderate neighbors.
- 7) We did not have space for a washing machine and had to go to the Laundromat once a week.
- 8) We did not have enough space to put wardrobes, and as a result our clothes got dust on them.

The conclusion is that by moving to a modern apartment, life became more bearable, safe and secure. And it is all due to HAAG's help. Thank you very much. You did a marvelous job.
Sincerely yours,

Michael and Talia Eisold.



About ten years ago I became aware of Housing for the Aged Action Group through Community Radio BCR. Some time later Molly Hadfield suggested I join the Committee of Management and so I did.

It is a disgraceful situation that governments in this country do so little, to make available much needed affordable housing, for the huge number of people who cannot afford to buy a home, and cannot afford the ever increasing coast of private rental.

It goes without saying that there is always going to be plenty of work for an organisation like HAAG as long as there is funding to pay for it.

Bob Brooks.

Our mistake.....

It was brought to HAAG's attention, by one of our management committee members, that the forum piece in our last newsletter failed to acknowledge the work our students on placement had achieved and presented on the day. So here goes.....

During June-November 2012 Liza Lucas and Mary Morrissey from the Chisholm Institute conducted a research project on the experiences of older people living in the private rental market. Called 'What will happen to me? – Older people facing housing crisis in the private rental market'.

The project involved conducting interviews with eleven older people who were assisted by HAAG's services over the past couple of years who had been at risk of homelessness.

The research aimed to empower older people who have recently experienced a housing crisis by giving them a voice to tell their story. This project supports recent community education activities by Housing for the Aged Action Group Inc. (HAAG) that aims to highlight the need of older people at risk of homelessness. Together this will emphasize concerns and lobby for changes to services and housing solutions for vulnerable older renters in Victoria. Each participant took part in a survey so that an individual profile was created about their housing past which included where they lived, level of education, income and health and wellbeing.

Key findings from the research were:

- As people age, safe, secure and affordable housing is highly valued and seen as integral to maintaining quality of life.
- There are a number of interrelated factors contributing to older persons being at risk of homelessness.
- Financial stress and hardship appeared to be a major contributing factor affecting the whole of participants lives including security, health and wellbeing, social connection and isolation.
- Housing provision services are difficult to access and often inappropriate for older people.
- The increasing cost and low vacancy rates in private rental housing added to the difficulties experienced.
- Participants mostly stated that government pensions and allowances are not adequate to cover costs in the private rental market.
- Private rental housing is inherently an unstable option for older people on a low income. Some people had a vulnerable housing past; some had great housing stability; however neither group was immune to a housing crisis.
- Suitable services were difficult to negotiate and attain.



Mary and Liza speaking at the Home at Last Forum on April 18 2013.



2001/2002

Margaret O'Callaghan and Molly Hadfield

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

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

ADMIN: 9654 7389

Home At Last: 1300 765 178

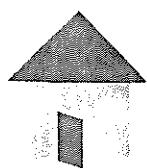
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**Housing for the Aged Action Group offers
Free and Confidential Advice to older people renting their home.**



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at last

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247-251 Flinders
Lane,
Melbourne, 3000**

**Admin: 9654 7389
Intake: 1300 765 178
(cost of a local call)**

Email: haag@oldertenants.org.au

**There are four main aspects
to our service:**

Housing options

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

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



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC

**We are on the Web:
www.oldertenants.org.au**