

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 7th August



INNOVATIVE SERVICE HOUSES ITS 600TH CLIENT DURING HOMELESSNESS WEEK

VICTORIA: Homelessness Week 2017 focuses on Innovation and Action and by the end of this week, a Melbourne-based Innovation Action Project will house its 600th older person. The *Home at Last* Service is the only one in Australia that focuses on preventing homelessness in over 55's.

Home at Last is a service of Housing for the Aged Action Group, a community group that works with older people to achieve housing justice and social change. Co-manager of HAAG, April Bragg says: *"We are overjoyed we could find homes for this many people."* She explains: *"Re-housing people in later life requires an understanding of factors unique to this age group, such as the stagnation of income and the need for the accommodation to be adaptable and permanent. We won't place our clients just anywhere; it must be age-appropriate else they will just be back in the system, or worse."*

Mr Fitu (68) called Home At Last after a decade of private-rental-hopping. After struggling to find work he was evicted, blacklisted and lived in unsafe conditions. His health deteriorated and after being on the public housing wait list for 23 years, he was losing hope. With the specialist support from Home At Last, Mr Fitu's application was put on the correct wait-list and he was housed into his own Public Housing unit after 2 months, paying only 25% of his pension for life.

"Having my new home means I can finally settle and never have to worry about being forced to move on again. It also means being charged a reasonable rent that I am able to pay from my pension." Says Mr Fitu. *"As I am getting older, being independent is very important to me and for the first time in my life I have a place on my own where I am in complete control of my life. Being securely housed is a wonderful feeling of freedom."*

The Home at last model is unique in that it is integrated, personalised and holistic. It doesn't impose time limits to its support, recognising the uniqueness of every case. HAAG is currently promoting the service nationally, with State Governments in South Australia and New South Wales showing real interest in adopting the model.

Home at Last has assisted 4,876 people since it was launched as one of the Victorian governments Innovation Action Projects in 2012. Recognising the success of the model, in 2015 the Department of Health and Human Services committed to ongoing funding.

As the veil lifts on dodgy retirement village practices, and the median cost of private rental rises to 91% of the aged pension, concerned older non-homeowners need specialist advice and support more than ever before.

For retirement housing inquiries contact HAAG's Retirement Housing Advice Service on 03 9654 7389 or for advice on housing options or support for over 55's call Home At Last on 1300 765 178
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For further information contact:

Housing for the Aged Action Group is a not for profit community group dedicated to improving housing outcomes for older people through service provision and policy development www.older tenants.org.au

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