

# Older Tenants' Voice

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

**April**

**2011**

**HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.**

***IN THIS ISSUE:***

**HAAG IS  
ON RADIO**

**3CR**

**'Raise the  
Roof'**

**Wednesdays  
once a month  
at 6pm**

**855**

**On the  
AM dial**

**Next shows**

**27 April**

**25 May**

**22 June**



**Parks and villages residents'  
news**

***HAAG Worker news and  
updates***

**Residential Tenancies Act -  
Amendments!**

**HAAG FORUM  
June 30th 2011**

## WELCOME NOTE

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2011.

This year we have decided on an integrated approach to our news, creating a quarterly newsletter that incorporates general HAAG news, caravan parks and residential villages news, as well as any other interesting stories we can find.

Our aim is to keep all of our members and associated organisations connected through information about our work - ACHA, tenancy advice and retirement housing - and the older persons housing sector.

## *Worker News:*

**Shanny Gordon** introduces herself as the new retirement housing worker  
**page 6**

Shanny also provides an update of the changes to Part 4 of the residential tenancies legislation **pages 8—9**

**Jeff Fiedler** talks about the upcoming HAAG forum **page 4**

Jeff also presents a summary of his Eastern Independent Living Units project  
**page 10—11**

## *Other News:*

**Wyn Stenton** from the committee of management writes about International Women's Day **page 7**

**The Caravan Parks and Residential Villages Working Group** share articles, ideas and directions for 2011 starting from **page 16**

### **Community connections:**

**Anne O'Hehir**, from Consumer Affairs Victoria, shares information about her role and the focus for 2011 within her department **page 22**

**Marc Westley**, from Peninsula Community Legal Centre Inc., provides us with a short summary of his role and work **page 23**

# HAAG FORUM

Thursday June 30th 2011

*Ageing on the Edge - Older Australians at  
Risk of Homelessness*

*Working towards an Older Persons Housing  
Strategy*



Come join us at the  
Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI),  
Cinema 1,  
Federation Square, Melbourne

[www.oldertenants.org.au](http://www.oldertenants.org.au) or phone (03) 9654 7389  
for details and to register

## ***Ageing on the Edge: Older Australians at risk of homelessness***

HAAG is organising a national event that will highlight the growing problem of older people experiencing homelessness in Australia and discuss ways of tackling this issue. It will be held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011 from 9.30am to 4pm in Cinema 1, Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Federation Square, Corner Swanston & Flinders Streets, Melbourne.

While the Commonwealth Government's White paper on Homelessness *The Road Home* announced some important targeted initiatives to assist some specific high need groups of older people, there is a much larger problem emerging for thousands of older people who are at risk of homelessness. The forum will hear about the latest research and the current responses from community agencies that are assisting older people in crisis. Most importantly the forum will hear directly from older people who have been threatened with the loss of their home. A major focus of the event will be a discussion on a possible framework for a government strategy to address the emerging problem of housing an ageing population, and how Australia can best respond to the increasing numbers of older people who are faced with a housing crisis.

Confirmed keynote speakers include Professor Andrew Jones, Director, AHURI Queensland Research Centre, who will discuss research on older people and homelessness; Trish Westmore, Researcher, Hanover Welfare Services will present her work on homelessness service pathways for older people; and Barbara Squires, General Manager Ageing, The Benevolent Society will present ideas around the importance of innovative older persons' housing models based on her organizations' ground-breaking initiative *The Ocean Street Project*.

A special edition of Council to Homeless Persons' *Parity* will be launched during the forum by the Hon. Mark Arbib, Commonwealth Minister for Housing.

The inaugural national meeting of the key agencies assisting older people at risk of homelessness through the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program, will also be held on the day preceding the forum, Wednesday 29 June 2011.

As this is a national event we are hoping to maximise the numbers of people who will be able to come from interstate, so there will be a limited number of free places available for members.

If you are interested in nominating to attend please call our office on 0396547389 (Melbourne metro) or 1800 637389 (country callers).

This event is gratefully sponsored by Consumer Affairs Victoria.

HAAG will be organising a specific event for members soon after the forum. We will contact our members at a later date with the details.





*Richard, Shanny, Molly and Dalene at a welcome lunch.*



*Jeff speaking at a residents' inaugural committee meeting*



## **Shanny Gordon**

### **Retirement Housing Worker**

Hello all!

My name is Shanny Gordon and I am the new retirement housing worker for HAAG.

I have met some members, but for those I have not yet met I would like to introduce myself and share with you my experiences at HAAG so far.

I began in my role on January 10th and my first day consisted of a trip to a caravan park in Daylesford.

It was the perfect introduction to my role and to the services HAAG offers to the community. From that day I have jumped right into the work.

My ideal work environment provides me with diversity, challenges and learning, and allows me to exercise passion and purpose. This role has, so far, ticked all those boxes.

I have been out visiting several members in residential parks and villages, and independent living units (ILUs), and I must say thank you to everyone for being so welcoming.

It has been enlightening, to say the least, in relation to the differences between parks and villages.

From tenure to maintenance to facilities provided there appears to be a lack of consistency across the industry, and often to the detriment of residents.

That being said the stories some residents have shared about their actions taken to protect their rights, and to promote the rights of all residents, has

been inspiring and leads me to believe that change can occur.

Some changes to the legislation have been passed, thanks to the lobbying of the residential parks and villages working group, and I believe that with continued energy and support more changes will occur.

Our ILU working group is still in its early stages but with their enthusiasm, and their valuable experiences, a raised awareness of the not-for-profit retirement village sector is on the horizon.

My focus for the next few months is to provide ILU residents in the southern metropolitan region with information about their rights and HAAG.

Regional meetings are also in the process of being planned to provide information about legislation changes, HAAG services and news updates, as well as providing a space for people to voice questions and concerns. This is especially for residents who find it difficult to attend meetings in the city.

Another interest for me are rental villages, which I am hoping to research more thoroughly in the later part of this year.

So for now I will leave it at that and look forward to meeting you all.

If you have any questions, concerns or ideas and you need information, support and assistance with your retirement housing please contact me at the HAAG office.

## **International Women's Day Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

International Women's Day celebrated its centenary on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March. The City of Yarra hosted an informal lunch along with a panel discussion about the successes that have been achieved and the visible and invisible challenges women still face today.

The speakers were unanimous in stressing that if women wanted improvements in their lives they needed to go out and do something about it and to meet any challenges in their lives head on.

Although women worldwide have come a long way in the last two centuries there are more challenges and improvements for the future.

Some of the great and varied challenges ahead are:

- Social justice and environment
- Aboriginal Health and Education
- Homophobic issues and discrimination
- Sex education (as one speaker put it "there's no use putting condoms on vegetables if you don't educate women regarding relationships, feelings and rights).

For refugees and migrants new to Australia, there are the challenges of loss of identity, self worth, culture, and homeland, along with embracing a new and different way of life and language barriers.

Education was the main issue of the day so that women have the knowledge for equal opportunity for a better life.

It was a challenging day listening to these speakers with their involvement in local and state issues but their dedication to improve women's lives was a standout feature.

I have been inspired by these women to go out and do something and I would encourage all women to take similar and empowering steps.

Wyn Stenton

## **FOLLOW UP TO THE CAMPAIGN FOR LEGISLATIVE REFORM**

After years of lobbying government, to make changes to the law that governs caravan and residential parks, the Caravan and Residential Parks and Residents Association (CARPRA) working group has had some success. The bill has been passed and the changes are waiting to be proclaimed (declared formally).

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) has just recently posted information on their website indicating that the “changes to the *residential Tenancies Act 1997* affecting caravan/residential parks are due to come into effect by March 2012” ([www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)).

HAAG has noticed some confusion among residents with information circulating indicating the changes are already in force. This is not yet the case and once the changes have been proclaimed THEN they can be applied.

The following obligations will be in the new Part 4A of the Act and “will regulate site agreements between residents who own their dwelling but rent the underlying land (site tenants) and park operators who rent out such sites (site owners)” ([www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)).

### Obligations:

- 365 days ‘notice to vacate’ for no specified reason (from 120 days)
- Site agreements in writing with a specified term
- Disclosure and explanation of rent, fees and charges
- 20 business days to consider an agreement with 5 days cooling off period after signing
- A copy of park rules before entry
- Site tenant liability maximum of 12 months rent
- VCAT’s jurisdiction for disputes increasing from \$10,000 to \$100,000
- 5 yr minimum site agreement for NEW PARKS
- Site tenants right to participate, in a residents’ committee, protected
- Clarifying rights and responsibilities of site tenants and site owners when a dwelling is sold or assigned

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Existing site agreements will also be subject to all obligations EXCEPT the 5 yr minimum term agreement.

CAV has the responsibility of regulating Part 4A of the Act. Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) has the responsibility for amendments to Part 14 concerning fire safety and emergency management.

Although the changes are not quite what the CARPRA working group were aiming for, at least some changes have been applied, which means there is hope for further, future change.

With the new government starting to make decisions about their direction the time for lobbying toward more legislative and policy changes has never been better.

HAAG and its members need to speak up, share their wisdom and experience, and convince the new government representatives that this area of retirement housing still requires many improvements.



## **INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS Emerging from the dark ages**

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) has provided assistance to older people in retirement housing for many years. Our services range from individual advocacy to community education and policy development. HAAG now also operates a service that focuses on the provision of information and support for older people in retirement housing. As part of this work HAAG has consulted with the Eastern Region office of Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) to develop a community education project that aimed to increase older residents' awareness of their rights and encourage them to take action when appropriate. The project was conducted over a 12 month period between January to December 2010.

A report based on the project has just been completed that has highlighted a number of concerns expressed by residents living in this form of housing. They include the following:

The not-for profit independent living unit sector is the most significant part of the retirement village industry with up to 60% of villages being managed by community based organisations. Despite its size the ILU sector receives almost no attention from government or industry bodies such as the Retirement Villages Association (RVA). Information produced by government departments such as Consumer Affairs Victoria, that is aimed to inform residents, is mainly directed to older people living in the minority for-profit villages and emphasises the issues that matter to them.

The avenues available to enable residents to take action when they have a problem are too obscure, complex or onerous for most residents to contemplate. It is essential that simple, seamless procedures are available to residents to ensure they can act on their rights when necessary. At present many residents do not know about, or understand, the mandatory internal dispute resolution procedures that are required to be established in all retirement villages. Residents are also unaware or unwilling to use the services of government departments such as CAV, or community resources such as HAAG, when they have a problem. Further, there are very few residents who take the next step of applying to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to resolve a dispute.

The structure of ILU housing may be most easily described as "not-for-profit older persons housing" due to the style of accommodation, the people housed in it, and the organisations that run them. However, simple understandable descriptions end there. A brief analysis of Council on the Ageing's ILU Directory, where the requirement for paying an ingoing contribution is identified, suggests that approximately 60% of ILUs are covered by the RVA while about 40% are covered by the Residential Tenancies Act.

For organisations like HAAG the varied nature of the types of accommodation available continually raises questions about the legal definition of this form of housing. To ensure that we provide accurate advice to residents we must analyse each village or ILU cluster before advice can be given. The challenge for residents living in this form of housing is even greater. Many older residents who live in this form of housing do not necessarily associate their housing as being a retirement village per se. This provides challenges for government in terms of the relevance of current legislation to the people for whom it is supposed to be serving. If a person does not believe they live in a retirement village then they are not likely to understand or make use of the legislation that may govern their accommodation.

One of the major obstacles of resident access to justice is the culture that pervades the management of many ILUs. While there are many well-managed, progressive not-for-profit organisations in the ILU sector there are also many that operate on an amateurish, almost feudal style of management where well-meaning volunteers hold positions of power over a group of residents who are either beholden to them or fearful of being in dispute with them.

HAAG has put forward a number of recommendations to Consumer Affairs Victoria for consideration. We will be campaigning on these issues until proper action is taken and implemented. If you would like a copy of the report please contact the HAAG office.

*Jeff Fiedler—Tenancy Advice/Policy Worker HAAG*

Have you visited our webpage yet? If you have looked at our webpage previously, have another look soon as updates happen frequently. The address is:

**<http://www.older tenants.org.au>**

On the website front page, you will find **Latest News and Events**, which runs stories from newspapers. Also on the front page you will see an item “**Conference: Ageing on the Edge: Older Australian's at risk of homelessness**” which has information about the forum we are holding in June this year.

Under the menu item **Working Group** you will find links to The Caravan and Residential Parks and Residents Association (CARPRA) and also the Independent Living Units (ILU) working group.

CARPRA meeting dates for the remainder of the year are listed along with relevant articles and interesting reading. Our Independent Living Units (ILU) working group is now also meeting regularly.

Details of these meetings will be made available on the website in addition to letters being mailed to members who have expressed an interest in attending meetings.

## NEXT NEWSLETTER

# Older Tenants' Voice

with Parks and Villages residents' news!

Distribution date: Monday July 4th

We need your stories, news and  
information!

If there is something of interest to you, or you have had an experience in your retirement housing that you feel others will benefit from hearing about, we would love your contribution!

Articles due: Friday June 17th

Send to: HAAG, 2nd floor, Ross House,  
247-251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, 3000

Or email: [shanny.gordon@oldertenants.org.au](mailto:shanny.gordon@oldertenants.org.au)

**CARAVAN PARKS AND RESIDENTIAL VILLAGES WORKING GROUP**  
**MEETINGS 2011**

<i>MARCH</i>	<i>TUESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>APRIL</i>	<i>TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>MAY</i>	<i>TUESDAY 10<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>JUNE</i>	<i>TUESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>JULY</i>	<i>TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>AUGUST</i>	<i>TUESDAY 9<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>SEPTEMBER</i>	<i>TUESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>OCTOBER</i>	<i>TUESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>NOVEMBER</i>	<i>TUESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup></i>	
<i>DECEMBER</i>	<i>TUESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup></i>	<i>(LAST MEETING FOR THE YEAR)</i>

**INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS WORKING GROUP**

*MEETINGS ONCE A MONTH*

***ARE YOU A PRIVATE RENTER?***

*ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING INVOLVED IN A WORKING GROUP  
FOCUSING ON ISSUES AND CONCERNS RELATING TO PRIVATE RENTAL  
ACCOMMODATION?*

***CONTACT JEFF FIEDLER***

*IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BEING INVOLVED WITH ANY WORKING GROUP  
PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE:*

*9654 7389  
OR  
1800 637 389 (COUNTRY CALLERS)*



# *Caravan Parks and Residential Villages News*

## **DIRECTIONS FOR THE CARAVAN PARKS AND RESIDENTIAL VILLAGES WORKING GROUP 2011**

The working group believes the advantages of trying to change parks and villages legislation is to create amicable relationships between residents, management and owners and to encourage further investment in villages by residents and industry.

The working group wants to improve the rights of residents.

The group has come up with the following focus for this year:

### **STANDARDISATION OF THE SYSTEM**

The following topics, with this focus in mind, are currently being discussed by the group to plan their next course of action:

- **Regional Meetings**  
Support and empowerment to residents of all parks and villages.
- **Management accreditation**  
Best practice.
- **Parks and Villages standards**
- **Parks and Villages registration**
- **Long term tenures**  
Stability and security for the substantial investments made by residents.
- **Utilities**  
How much residents are charged by management for power, gas and water.
- **Standard fees**
- **Standard deferred management fees**  
Should be based on the purchase price.
- **Standard contracts**  
A standard contract across the board with provision for additional individual park and village requirements.

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- **Maintenance fund**
- **Security**  
Entry, lighting and safety.
- **Emergency services and procedures**  
Is there room for free passage of emergency vehicles?  
Is there access and an evacuation plan?
- **Resident rights**  
Do you know your rights?  
Residents' committees.
- **Building Standards**  
Accessible and appropriate facilities.

The two questions are :

***WHAT DO WE WANT?***

***and***

***WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO, AS A GROUP, TO ACHIEVE WHAT WE WANT?***

The working group meet monthly to discuss issues and clarify the rights and responsibilities of residents and management (see meeting dates p. 13).

We are interested in your experiences, ideas, comments and input about the topics above. We are also interested in your active involvement, whether it be at city meetings or regional meetings.

If you are interested in contributing please email, phone or send in your thoughts.

Assisted contribution by Lionel Foster



## THE VALUE OF A RESIDENTS' COMMITTEE

In November 2010 it was evident that the residents of the Village that I live in did not have any appropriate representation to Management resulting in many complaints being made to Consumer Affairs.

It became very evident that formation of a Residents' Committee was absolutely essential.

Fortunately the owner of the Village, Mr. Walter Elliott, has been very cooperative and has supplied us with initial funding and a furnished meeting room in which to conduct our business and has also responded to our reasonable requests.

The following is a list of some of our achievements since December 2010:

- Produced Residents' Committee Rules
- Design of official forms so that a positive outcome can be achieved and recorded.
- Communication box in main Community hall
- Improved communication and liaison with Management.
- Emergency access after-hours information stickers to each home and the formation of an Emergency plan.
- Air-conditioning to be installed in the Community hall for next Summer.
- Improvement in maintenance of the Village
- Dangerous trees being removed or lopped
- Residents' Committee dedicated furnished meeting room

Setting up is not always an easy task as it is necessary to have some on the committee who may have had previous experience in business or committees and also a competent Secretary who can write minutes for submission to Management. Also Committee members should have some knowledge of meeting procedure but this can be gained by reading as there are many books on the market which assist novice members. I would recommend that a Residents' Committee is an essential part of Residential Village life which also requires good cooperation from the Management.

*Eunice Walters*

*President - Willow Lodge Residents' Committee*

***ARE YOU INTERESTED IN STARTING A RESIDENTS' COMMITTEE IN YOUR PLACE OF RESIDENCE, BE IT PARK, VILLAGE OR INDEPENDENT LIVING UNIT?***

***HAAG can assist you!***

***Contact Shanny Gordon or Jeff Fiedler for more information***



## **Calling all caravan and residential park residents in country Victoria!**

Over 2011 HAAG will be conducting a number of meetings across all regions of Victoria to inform caravan and residential park residents about the upcoming changes to the Residential Tenancies Act that will provide improved rights for residents.

If you live in a caravan or residential park in regional Victoria and you would like us to come to your area please call HAAG on 1800 637389 (free call for country residents)

## Park Tenancy Agreement Story

Some years ago, when my wife and I decided to travel Australia using a 4 –wheel drive and caravan, we completely sold our home and all our furniture and other belongings.

We wanted a caravan park to use as our base so that if we wanted to continue to travel we still could and come back to base when ever we wanted to.

It took some time to find a park that appealed to us. We were made welcome by the then Manager. We explained what we wanted to do and he gave us a choice of three blocks.

During our travels I began to have health problems. We had noticed in the park that we had chosen, a new trend taking place. This trend appeared to be that people were renting a block in the park and having a manufactured home built on that block at a very reasonable cost. They then owned that home and just paid a rent for the block that their home was on. We started to seriously think about doing the same thing.

We had a meeting with the owner of the park regarding us renting a block and having a manufactured home built on it. We decided to go ahead and choose a block and then sold our caravan.

I decided to get some information about the builder that built the manufactured homes., such as: was he a member of the Builders Guarantee Fund?

We then looked at some display units and decided to go ahead and design our own unit. We had to have a few meetings with the builder to get what we wanted. At the time of signing the contract I did say to the builder that if we noticed things that we believed were not correct would he agree to have them corrected. Once every thing was agreed to we commenced building.

We eventually moved into our new home in December 2001.

After a couple of years living in the park, security of tenure raised it's ugly head as we saw and heard of parks closing down due to park owners were being approached by building developers to buy their land. This was of cause of great concern to my wife and I. I decided to look further into this and wondered if there was such a thing as a tenancy agreement. I contacted the Peninsula Community Legal Centre in Frankston, had a number of meetings and I drafted a number of examples of agreements.

After a couple of months we were very close to what we wanted and it was kept very simple. I met with three other families to get their thoughts and made some more changes. I then met with the owner of the park for discussion about this agreement. Together we made some changes to suit both parties.



The term of this agreement was for a five year period and renewable each five years. The Tenancy Act at that time would not allow an agreement for a longer period than five years so this is what we had to abide by.

In October 2004 the involved families, together with the Park Owners, signed the first Victorian Tenancy Agreement. It took about five month's hard work to get to this stage. At the end of September 2009 we all signed for another five years.

There are many things that still need to be changed in the park. This can only be done if the residents work together but this is a big problem. I think that there is a great deal of apathy in the parks, and residents complain but do not do anything constructive to get things fixed. They tend to rely on the outspoken people to do the work for them and then gain the benefits from their work.

Some residents commented, at the time of forming the agreements, that "it is not worth the paper that it is written on". In fact one resident went to his solicitor and was also told that it was no good.

I strongly believe that if all residents really cared about what is happening things would change. This should begin with all residents reading the Tenancy Act and how it affects them.

*Leon Pollwade*

### **HOUSING INFORMATION CENTRE**

Have you ever wondered where to find information to guide you about your housing future or to resolve a problem you may be having with your current housing? An exciting new initiative at HAAG that may be able to assist you with this is the establishment of HAAG's Housing Information Centre.

The Centre will commence operating in April and has been made possible through funding from the Sidney Myer Foundation Commemorative Grant. Located within the HAAG office the Centre will offer access to a range of housing related information.

The Centre is for anyone who has a housing question and will provide free written resources covering topics such as finding and applying for suitable accommodation, retirement housing options and tenancy rights. The centre will also provide information on housing support services in your local area.

The Centre will be open for drop in Monday to Friday 12.00 – 4.00pm so please feel free to come in and browse the many publications that we have on offer.

## ***WORKING GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS***

As a permanent resident who owns his own unit in a caravan park, I do not have a proper lease agreement with the park owners so I do not know just how long I can live here. There are quite a few other long term residents like myself who also own their units, and pay fees for the sites plus additional charges for power and gas bottles, but they also have no proper lease.

We all would like a proper lease agreement with the owners, as without a lease we don't know how many years we can live here.

Of the permanent residents that I do speak with, all would like to have a 10 to 20 year lease agreement with the option of being able to transfer the lease, along with the unit, to a relative if something were to happen to us, or our circumstances change.

Neither I, nor the other permanent residents, have met the owners of the park hence we have no knowledge of what any future plans they may have.

I'm sure other permanent residents who own their own units in other caravan parks would also like the same formal lease agreement so they would have no doubt about how long they can reside in their park.

I have been to quite a few meetings now for the Caravan and Residential Parks Residents working group, and it is great to see them working hard to get a better deal - not only for people living in residential villages but also for people like myself who own a unit in a caravan park.

I would like to thank them along with Jeff, Shanny and the remaining HAAG workers for the support and lobbying they provide to create reform.

Robin

***IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING A STORY OR COMMENT FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER PLEASE CONTACT US!***

For some time now the working group of Caravan & Residential Village Resident Group has been looking at various ways to improve “our lot” with village life. One of the things we would like to see is some form of accreditation of village managers. At the moment Owners / Managers require no form of certification that states they are capable of adequately managing a facility.

It was decided to do a comparison with a couple of states. In NSW the Residential Parks Act 1998 & Residential Park Regulations 2006 make no mention of Park management accreditation.

In Queensland, The Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act 2003, likewise makes no mention of accreditation for park managers, BUT to be a park manager one should be licensed under The Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000. It deals at length under Parts 4 & 5 the requirements for suitability & eligibility of the applicant and the steps needed to obtain a license. The license is to be renewed annually.

Park and Village Service (PAVS) put in a submission in response to the review of the NSW Residential Parks Act 1998 asking:

**ISSUE 15,”** *Is there any role for the act in improving the level of competency of residential park managers?”*. In the background they outline the various tasks that are expected of a manager and note that operating a residential park is a difficult job. The problems residents often report include:

- Harassment & victimization
- Selective & preferential application of park rules
- Interference with the election of park liaison committees
- Lack of familiarity with or the inability to accurately interpret the law.

PAVS expressed the view that minimum qualifications are an essential first step for improving competence levels and that park managers need training in the following areas:

- The nature and requirements of the position
- Residential tenancy law
- Dealing with emergency situations
- Making appropriate referrals
- OHS requirements
- Communications & interpersonal skills
- Management
- Dispute resolution
- Community development
- Local government regulations.

They see the development of a licensing scheme, ensuring minimum standards for education & performance of the Village / Park manager as an essential step. The Act should require that managers of Parks / Villages be suitably qualified.

This is what we in Victoria have wanted for a long time!

## *COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS*

### *ANNE O'HEHIR—CONSUMER AFFAIRS VICTORIA*

Anne has been involved in program, project, change and general management for more than 15 years, mostly in the not for profit and government sectors.

In her current job at Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) Anne manages the Residential Tenancy Program. There are eight Programs organised around industry themes. Other Programs include Rooming Houses, Domestic Building, Fair Trading, Product Safety, Licensed Sector, Sex Work and Small Business and Registered Entities (which includes Retirement Villages).

Anne's role as Program Manager is focussed on managing relationships with stakeholders and building partnerships with community and industry groups to influence better outcomes for tenants and landlords in the rental market. Another important part of the role is coordinating the integration of CAV's role and function as a regulator across various areas of CAV and between organisations involved in residential tenancy such as HAAG, the Tenants Union of Victoria, other community legal centres, Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, Victorian Legal Aid, Office of Housing in Department of Human Services and the Registrar for Housing Agencies in Department of Treasury and Finance.

In the year 2010-11 the program focussed on the introduction of changes to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2010 including the new Part 4A which relates to caravan/residential parks; working with the caravan/residential parks industry to introduce good practice in reducing and managing disputes and developing an information kit to assist with the set up and ongoing management of Residents' Committees. Another area of focus for the Program is a review of services delivered by CAV directly as well as those funded by CAV but delivered by other agencies such as HAAG.

In 2011-12 the focus on caravan/residential parks will continue. Additional focus areas include working with industry peak bodies to improve property management practice especially repairs as well as focussing on ensuring that landlords who manage their own rental properties are aware of where they can access information and of their obligations, particularly in regard to lodgement of bonds.

## **MARC WESTLEY—CARAVAN PARK AND ROOMING HOUSE OUTREACH WORKER**

Peninsula Community Legal Centre Inc. (PCLC) has been delivering free legal and related services to the community for over thirty years. The centre provides specialist programs in the areas of family law, child support, family violence, tenancy and consumer law. Community legal education, special projects and participation in law reform are also important aspects of the Centre's work.

PCLC runs a **Caravan Park and Rooming House Outreach Project**. Funded by Consumer Affairs Victoria, the Project operates across the local government areas of Manningham, Maroondah, Whitehorse, Bayside, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Frankston, Mornington Peninsula, Cardinia, Casey, Yarra Ranges, Knox and Monash.

The PCLC Caravan Park & Rooming House Outreach Project:

- Visits caravan parks and rooming houses
- Organises activities such as caravan park community barbeques where support agencies can attend and liaise with caravan park residents in an informal setting
- Informs residents of their tenancy rights and responsibilities
- Refers residents to services offering relevant assistance, including the PCLC Tenant and Consumer Advocacy Program
- Fosters relationships with appropriate support agencies and
- Develops an understanding of issues impacting upon residents to inform policy work.

For more information about the **PCLC Caravan Park & Rooming House Outreach Project** - phone PCLC on 9783 3600, send an email to [pclc@pclc.org.au](mailto:pclc@pclc.org.au) or visit our website [www.pclc.org.au](http://www.pclc.org.au)

*This part of the newsletter provides a chance for other hard working individuals to share what their roles are in relation to older people and housing, as well to promote the good work they do.*



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

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1800 637 389 (country)

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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*

Interested tenants and residents are encouraged to join  
Housing for the Aged Action Group  
**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.  
Email: [haag@oldertenants.org.au](mailto:haag@oldertenants.org.au) web: [www.oldertenants.org.au](http://www.oldertenants.org.au)