



**June 2015  
Winter  
edition**

**Housing - a right not a privilege!**



**Older Tenant's Voice since 1988  
Housing for the Aged Action Group**



Welcome again members and friends!

By now most of you will have heard the good news about funding for Home at Last (HAL). The State budget provided us with funding to keep HAL alive for another four years!

It is back to business as usual, though we will keep on campaigning to have more affordable housing built.

The wonderful HAL staff are now secure in their jobs

for at least another four years.

Heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you for your ongoing support for HAAG over the last 12 months; for letters written, for postcards and emails sent, for the visits to politicians and attendance at gatherings, and rallying around to help in so many ways.

Cheers,

*Vicki*

Photos on the front cover:  
Top:  
Some of the HAAG/HAL staff  
Bottom:  
HAAG members Carmel and Denise cutting our funding celebration cake.

Left:  
Vicki at funding celebration!



### ***HAAG IS ON RADIO 3CR - 'RAISE THE ROOF'***

***Every 4th Wednesday at 6pm:***

***Next shows =***

***22 July 2015***

***26 August 2015***

***23 September 2015***

If you would like to share something with us on our upcoming radio shows please contact the office and have a chat to Shane (our 3CR show co-ordinator) 9654 7389

***3CR's radiothon is on which means its time to support the community airwaves and HAAG's Raise the Roof program. Contact Shane (our 3CR co-ordinator) on 9654 7389 if you would like to donate!***

**The highlight of this newsletter is the fantastic news that our Home at Last service has been approved funding for the next 4 years!**

Everyone has been aware that we have been campaigning for the continued funding of Home at Last since last September. At that time it was very unlikely that the service would receive further funding as the previous Liberal Government had slowed its process of homelessness service reforms and the future was very uncertain.

This did not stop our HAAG membership though, who are used to fighting for the rights of older people. We know that Home at Last is the only service of its kind that stops many older people from being evicted and ensures they can move into long term, affordable housing where they can be happy and healthy for many years to come.

Our members were involved in a wide range of campaign actions including sending over 500 postcards to the Minister's office, visits to local MPs, getting support from a wide range of community agencies who also sent messages to the Minister and media coverage in newspapers. We even had a feature story on the ABC TV news one Sunday night.

So thank you so much to you all for your incredible support for Home at Last. You have all contributed to this successful outcome. This means that vulnerable older people will continue to get the help and support they need for many years to come!



Above: Kris Sparks - HAAG Committee of Management member (campaign mail out)

We are also sincerely grateful to the Housing Minister Martin Foley for his government's significant investment in our services. It is fantastic to work with a Minister who has a strong sense of social justice.

This is not the end of our campaigning though. We have fought and won this battle but there are bigger issues to be tackled such as more housing supply and options for older people. We also need more workers in the community who can help older people and better laws to protect older people.

With you we will continue fighting for housing justice!



Memories and Mudcake: photos from our funding celebration!

## Campaigns off and running...

We have won the battle for the ongoing provision of our Home at Last service, now we are moving straight away to tackle even bigger issues like more public housing, better laws to protect older people, more housing options and even better services for older people across the community.

Soon we will be starting a Policy Campaign Working Group that will draw up a strategy for future action on these issues. If you would like to be involved please let us know and attend the monthly meetings of the Working Group.

To kick things off we held a 'Souper' General Meeting on 11 June 2015 where 50 HAAG members came together to raise the issues everyone wants our organisation to address.

This was combined with our mid-Winter warming soup lunch that was enjoyed by all.

The issues raised in the workshops held on the day will be soon compiled and, along with the work of the Policy Campaign Working Group, will be announced in our next edition of the newsletter.

We really look forward to your involvement as we work even harder for housing justice for older people.

In the meantime here are some photos of HAAG members hard at work, and enjoying the lunch, at our 'Souper' General Meeting.



**Souper meeting!**



## Home at Last film launch - *Feels Like Home*

A lovely time was had by all on 16 April 2015 as we ate popcorn and watched the premier of the new Home at Last film: *Feels like home*.

Thank you to Toni Bentley from Bentwheel productions for making such a remarkably touching film.

Thank you to Neville, Joan, Betty, Margherita and Bruno for sharing thier very personal stories with us, and to David and Co. for his beautiful performance.

We are very thankful also to those that attended and shared in the exciting unravelling of this film.

*Feels like home is a touching film telling the story of five clients who experienced the threat of homelessness prior to contacting Home at Last. All five clients were assisted into their lasting Homes...at last!*

If you would like a copy of the film please contact the office on (03)9654 7389.

Alternatively the film can be viewed on our website: [www.older tenants.org.au](http://www.older tenants.org.au) (just click on our media drop down tab - HAAG films)

Photos  
Right: Toni Bentley  
Below left: Jenny, Sue and  
and Sue enjoying popcorn  
at the launch!



Photo right:  
Our fabulous film stars and launch panel -  
Neville, Joan, Bruno and Margherita



**IT'S MEMBERSHIP TIME!**  
Please remember to fill out the 2015-2016 form inserted into this newsletter to renew your HAAG membership for another year!  
Also please help us plan for future newsletters by filling in our short questionnaire and sending it back with your membership form!  
Thank you in advance!

## Preventing Homelessness in Older Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities Project launch 22 April 2015

Housing for the Aged Action Group in partnership with the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) - launched a major project aimed at preventing homelessness in older Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities in April this year.

The project was launched by the Victorian Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Robin Scott.



(Below)  
ECCV chairperson, Eddie Micallef, said the issue of homelessness in older Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities, was an ongoing and increasingly important issue, especially as Australia has in general and ageing population, which is also reflected in many CALD communities.

“Insecure housing and risk of homelessness is an issue that has been examined by the Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria,” Mr Micallef said.

“A joint approach by ECCV and HAAG will enable ethnic and multicultural communities to better engage with housing services to receive information in their language and with consideration of cultural values.”

Jeff Fiedler, Manager of Education and Housing Advice at HAAG, said people from CALD backgrounds often faced additional challenges in terms of potential homelessness.

“They may find it difficult to access information about housing rights and options in their own language. Making sure that culturally diverse communities have access to independent information, advice and advocacy is crucial to ensuring the most vulnerable older people are assisted,” Mr Fiedler said.

“While 34 per cent of HAAG clients are from a CALD background, it is of concern that some cultural groups with high proportions of older renters are under-utilising our service.

“HAAG has identified the need to directly reach out to older people from CALD backgrounds. The project will ensure that older people from CALD backgrounds have access to housing services – which will reduce housing crisis and homelessness.”



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The 12 month project - funded by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation – targets older people CALD communities throughout Victoria, with a particular focus on people from Chinese, South Asian, Arabic Speaking, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnia and Herzegovinian communities.

The project has developed community education materials in 10 languages. From August this year, community education sessions will be delivered by bi-lingual workers who are part of the communities they are speaking to. This means that members of these communities will have increased knowledge about how Home at Last can help them.



Photo above from left to right:  
Anita Hopkins (Lord Mayors),  
Vicki Gutsjahr (HAAG committee of  
management), Marion Lau OAM JP (ECCV),  
Hon. Robin Scott, Gemma White (HAAG project  
worker), Eddie Micallef (ECCV)



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### ***You're famous!***

We now have a Gallery in operation on our website [oldertenants.org.au](http://oldertenants.org.au).

If you have been to one of our recent events you can see your happy face and those of other HAAG members.

Haven't been to an event? You should!- It's always a great time, and we always have food!

Please call 9654 7389 if you do not want your photo displayed.

**On the 21 May 2015 the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jane Garrett, launched a new campaign to help Victorians make informed decisions about retirement villages.**

**HAAG members, Daisy Ellery and Helen Vallack, star in the campaign in a video produced by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) providing their experiences about moving into, and living in, a retirement village.**

**(They are pictured below with the Minister at the media launch).**

**Helen and Daisy also spoke at the media launch, and welcomed Channel's 7 and 10 into their homes to be part of a news story related to this awareness campaign.**

**We are very proud of their willingness to be involved to ensure retirees are better informed about their retirement housing choices.**

**Both videos can be viewed from the HAAG website - [www.older tenants.org.au](http://www.older tenants.org.au)  
Just click on the News & Events/News tab.**

**The basis of the campaign is that moving into a retirement village is a significant decision and costs can be substantial, when you move in and when you move out.**

**CAV would like prospective residents to be informed and find out as much as possible before making their decision.**

**CAV provides information to help retirees with this process which can be accessed on their website [www.consumer.vic.gov.au/retire](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/retire) or you can call them on 1300 55 81 81.**

**Alternatively you can contact HAAG on 9654 7389 and we will be able to assist you with the information that is most appropriate for you.**



### ***Retirement Housing Background Paper***

**In a response to a request from the Advisor to the Minister for Consumer Affairs HAAG has compiled a retirement housing background paper that provides an overview of the retirement housing sector in Victoria.**

**The paper includes a brief history of the development of the sector and brief descriptions of the main retirement housing options available in Victoria.**

**This undertaking was a collaboration between HAAG, Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC), Council on the Ageing (COTA) and Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria (RRVV).**

**If you would like a copy contact us on (03) 9654 7389 or you can access it via the HAAG website in Publications/Parks and Villages.**



## Working group updates...

HAAG's Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages (CARPAU) and Independent Living Units (ILU) working groups have continued to work tirelessly towards improved protections for older tenants and residents.

Their commitment to ensuring improvements are made in the retirement housing sector is inspiring and we appreciate the time, input and effort they put in to this important work.

Both groups have begun working on their 12 month plan, with clear aims and objectives. This planning is in line with the current Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) funding commitment of 12 months, with further funding to be decided upon completion of a review of the CAV funded services.

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### ILU working group

The 12 month plan for the ILU working group focuses on increasing the group membership and being heard - by residents, stakeholders and Government.

Through improving communication material and utilising media the group hopes to engage with more ILU residents state-wide to encourage greater participation.

When we use the term ILUs we mean not-for-profit retirement villages and ILUs with rental arrangements.

If you are an ILU resident and would like to be involved with this working group please contact HAAG on 9654 7389.

To the right are some of our ILU working group members.



### CARPAU working group

The 12 month plan for the CARPAU working group involves working on a detailed submission to support the groups' aim to achieve stand-alone legislation for residential villages in Victoria.

The group aims to be prepared should CAV announce a review of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. The last time CAV undertook an in-depth review of the Act was in 2007 so the current submission expands on the last submission HAAG compiled, but provides a more current perspective of the sector.

If you are a residential park/village resident and would like to be involved with this working group please contact HAAG on 9654 7389.

We will be conducting regional visits over the next 12 months, to visit residents living in ILUs, not-for-profit retirement villages, caravan parks, residential parks and residential villages.  
If you would like us to visit you, or organise a meeting in your region, please contact Shanny Gordon on 9654 7389 to have a chat.

## Housing Support

Since being notified of continued funding, demand for housing assistance has steadily increased. Over the past two months the Home at Last intake service has seen 225 new clients, with 63% of people assessed as needing urgent housing assistance. 40% of these new clients were from a CALD background and we attribute this increase to the project we are currently doing with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria – Preventing Homelessness in Older CALD Communities.

Rehousing of clients through our Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program has exceeded previous months with a record 52 long term property offers received, and 38 households housed over the April, May period.

We have highlighted below the story of a couple we recently housed and now that we have secured ongoing funding we hope to bring you many more good housing stories. Our reporting phase as an Innovation Action Project ends in June and we are planning to provide members with a full three year statistically report in the next newsletter. We will also re-visit and report back on how some of the people we housed in the first stage of the project are fairing three years on.

### *Peter and Margaret's Story*

After retiring from work Peter and his wife Margaret were planning to enjoy their retirement years. However, as often happens, life does not go the way we plan and this was certainly the case in Peter and Margaret's situation.

Peter and Margaret are in their late 60's and lived in a private rental property that was becoming more inappropriate due to their declining health. Their rental property was in very poor condition, stifling hot in summer and freezing in winter, it also had multiple entrances and internal stairs, and the shower was over the bath.

Soon after retiring Peter was diagnosed with severe arthritis and in particular terrible hip pain. Peter's pain was so severe he was having trouble accessing the shower and was assessed as being at high risk of falling. His arthritic condition also meant he was having difficulty getting in and out of the house, as well as accessing the upstairs bedrooms. Margaret was also suffering from arthritis, mainly in her hands, and was really struggling to use the old twist type taps that were throughout the house.

Peter and Margaret's GP was very concerned with how difficult the couple were finding it to live in the property and suggested he could make a referral to an Occupational Therapist (OT) for a modifications assessment. The couple declined the offer of referral as they were very fearful of a rent increase. Their rent was already at 60% of their income, and the last time they had asked for repairs to the hot water service the landlord put up the rent by \$20.00 per week, effectively ensuring the couple paid for the installation of the new hot water service.

There was also another risk looming in the corner: the landlord was considering renovating in the near future as the property was quite rundown and this would have certainly either resulted in increased rent or being asked to vacate, so they thought it best they lay low, not ask for anything, and struggle on as best as they could.

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After coming across a Home At Last “Finding a Home” booklet in their local library Peter and Margaret dropped in to the HAAG office in early January seeking housing assistance. After hearing their story I straightaway filled in a public housing early housing support application form, and outlined all the mobility and quality of life difficulties the couple were experiencing in a support letter. A referral was made to an OT for a modifications assessment report and this was submitted along with the application and my letter of support.

The couple’s housing application was approved in early March, and a property offer was made in April, coincidentally, or maybe not, the offer was made on Margaret’s birthday. Margaret was overwhelmed with joy and she stated she considered the unit the most beautiful present she ever had: a house to call home, a small front garden and back yard that catches the afternoon sun, close to public transport and all amenities, but most importantly, it was a home that had all of the modifications they needed to live safely now and into the future. Both also stated they were much relieved to be living without fear of eviction due to ever escalating rent.

After assisting Peter and Margaret to move to their new home in April I did a follow up home visit in early May to see how they had settled into their new home. Upon arrival I was greeted by two big smiles, they both proudly gave me a guided tour around the unit; it had a really homely atmosphere and with great pride and satisfaction both showed me the location of their new brand washing machine. Margaret explained they had owned the washing machine for several years but were unable to use it in their previous flat as there was no laundry; they had been storing it in their bedroom for years with the hope of one day being able to use it.

It is outcomes like these, when clients are happy and love their new home, which gives me the greatest job satisfaction, as we all feel and know home is everything to most of us. We are very pleased to have met Peter and Margaret and glad that we were able to achieve such a great housing outcome for them.

**Maria Cozzi**  
Team Leader, Housing Support

“ There is nothing more important than a good, safe, secure home. ”

Rosalynn Carter

A fabulous quote by Rosalynn Carter, the First Lady of the United States from 1977 to 1981, and we could not have said it better!

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

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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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247-251 Flinders  
Lane,  
Melbourne, 3000**

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

**Email: [haag@oldertenants.org.au](mailto: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](http://www.oldertenants.org.au)**