

Older Tenants' Voice

December

2011

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

HAAG IS
ON RADIO

3CR

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

855

On the
AM dial

Next shows

28 Dec

25 Jan

22 Feb

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



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

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WELCOME NOTE from our Chairperson

Hello,

I thought I would just say hello to all members of Housing for the Aged Action Group, with a special mention to all NEW members.

I feel honoured to be elected as Chairperson for 2011-2012. I have been on the Committee of Management for the past 3 years and have learned so much about the plight of older people and their problems with housing.

I have been interested in improving conditions for older people, having worked as a nurse in retirement villages for 13 years. For the past 7 years I have also been on a working group in conjunction with HAAG working towards improved conditions for caravan parks and residential villages.

As members of HAAG we all need to insist that State and Federal governments, as well as local councils, ensure that older persons on lower incomes have access to affordable, proper housing and conditions.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Dalene Salisbury for her contribution to HAAG as past Chairperson. Dalene I hope you enjoy your new home and now have more time for yourself.

I look forward to seeing you all in the coming year.

Wyn Stenton



Photo on front cover

Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation (from left to right):

Anita Hopkins, Molly Hadfield, Ena Ahern,
Wyn Stenton, Catherine Brown, MengNi
Deng

Daniel Mendelbaum (photographer)

2011 HAAG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The HAAG Annual General Meeting was held on 13th October 2011 and attracted around 50 members. Business of the day was to elect a committee of Management which is vital to the smooth operation of the organisation. As the number of nominations equalled the number of vacancies, no voting was required by the members on the day. The Office Bearers are as follows:

Chairperson -Wyn Stenton; Vice Chairperson - Helen Draper; Secretary- Dalene Salisbury ; Treasurer - Patrick Barron and with eight (8) Committee Members elected: Amy Duncan, Patricia Black, Molly Hadfield, Marian Foster, Sivarasa Nallaratham, Robert Newey, Robert Purves and Robert Brooks.

A further business item was to ask the members to vote on a Special Resolution to make a small change to the HAAG constitution. The special resolution was to merge the role of the Secretary and Public Officer and the members voted on, and passed, the motion.

Jeff Fiedler took the floor to speak of the hard work of the Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages Working Group (CARPRA). Jeff noted that Wyn Stenton (newly elected Chairperson of HAAG) was a long standing member of CARPRA. The group size is now 170 members in number with members drawn from across Victoria. As owner/renters they had adopted an attractive form of retirement housing.

From 1 September new legislation under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* came in to force which better protects owner/renters owing to the effort of the HAAG / CARPRA working group.

Jeff remarked on the courage of many individuals who have dealt with opposition not only from park owners but from fellow residents.

Lionel Foster, from Summerhill Residential Park, said he commenced his actions eight years ago when he first came to HAAG seeking assistance over matters that concerned him within his park.

Lionel stated that he was privileged and proud to be a part of the group of residents who have fought for legislative changes and he acknowledged the contribution of Jeff and Shanny with the group.

Wyn Stenton, newly elected Chairperson, returned to the podium where she acknowledged the support from the residents and from HAAG. Shanny proposed a toast to the Working Group Residents (CARPRA) for the present changes to legislation and to changes in the future.

A light lunch was served allowing members to eat and catch up with fellow friends.

AGM HAPPY SNAPS



Top left: Dalene Salisbury
Top right: AGM turn out
Middle: Celebration cake for the working group
Bottom left: CAPRA group members
Bottom Right: Wyn Stenton

OUR PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS



Since 2008 United Way Melbourne have provided us with an annual for the provision of white goods for our older clients who are rehoused by HAAG.

The funds have been made available through the generous corporate partners and their staff who have contributed to the United Way Melbourne Community Chest.

Funding from United Way Australia enabled us to replace this fridge (left) with a new one. Our older, frail client was delighted with her new model.



Above: Lizzie (interpreter), Ming & Ju

Left: Mr M at the entrance to his new home

We recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation to assist our Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program clients. The project **Housing for Life** will assist our clients to move into safe, secure and accessible housing. HAAG is often unable to access programs that assist people with the money they often need to establish their new home. Funds from the Foundation will be used to pay for things such as rent in advance, retrieve belongings from storage and buying essential household items such as white goods, bedding etc. We thank the Foundation for their ongoing support and look forward to furthering our ongoing work in 2012.

OUR PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS continued



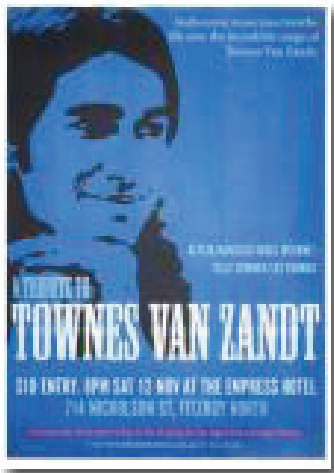
Melbourne musicians breathed life into the incredible songs of Townes Van Zandt.

Artist Lee Thomas nominated Housing for the Aged Action Group to receive proceeds from ***A Tribute to Townes Van Zandt*** held on Saturday 12 November at the Empress Hotel, Fitzroy North.

Les Thomas was delighted to present HAAG with a cheque made out to the value of \$500.

He is pictured top left presenting the cheque to Ena and Nini of HAAG.

Our thanks are extended to Les and fellow artists.



The Victorian Law Foundation has awarded HAAG a generous grant worth over \$30,000 to support a project assisting caravan parks and residential village residents to start residents' committees.

HAAG is in the process of finalising the necessary details with the Foundation to receive the grant money.

Watch this space for further news about the development of the project.

For more details about the Foundations grants, and the nominated grant recipients, go to: www.victorialawfoundation.org.au

Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged Program (ACHA)

This program at HAAG has two workers Ena Ahern and Crystal McDonald. Ena is the ACHA Victorian Intake, Referral and Housing Options worker and Crystal is the Outreach worker for the program's catchment area.

HAAG has received calls into the ACHA program from as far away as Perth and country NSW. In both cases ACHA programs in those states called, on behalf of frail elderly living in their regions, seeking information and housing options in Victoria.

There have been a few hundred callers into HAAG for assistance since the last newsletter and some have become clients of HAAG's ACHA outreach program. Crystal has visited people in their homes and assisted with their applications for Office of Housing and Independent Living units. Through her assertive outreach approach, appropriate housing has been obtained very quickly for some very fortunate people.

April Bragg has made successful submissions to Philanthropic Trusts such as the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation from whom we have received a cheque for \$10,000.00 to assist with paying the removalist and settling in costs for our ACHA clients. We also received a grant to assist our ACHA clients from United Way Australia and made possible by the staff at Boeing Aerostructures Australia. This grant will be used specifically to purchase white goods. We very much appreciate this as the program does not receive any brokerage funding from the Commonwealth Government who funds of the ACHA program.

HAAG wishes to welcome RMIT social work student MengNi Deng who is on placement from University. Mengni has become a very active support within the organisation and has successfully assisted with some elderly Mandarin speakers who have visited the office for assistance. She has also visited clients in their homes with Crystal and has quickly become familiar with the housing options available to elderly Victorians. We wish her success on her placement at HAAG.

News from the field - Crystal McDonald

When you are securely and happily housed it is easy to forget the housing shortage experienced by thousands of Australians. It also may not cross your mind that you may be next. But as the universe continues to expand and Cause gives rise to Effect, our environments change - and people who have been content in their environment for many years are shaken. A sudden Notice to Vacate or the dawning realisation that their home no longer suits their ageing bodies can be the catalyst for acute stress and anxiety. What would you do? Where would you go?

Thankfully, funding by the Federal government provides our ACHA program the means to support older people in this situation and I'm the lucky one who gets to do it. I have been blessed to obtain a position that pays me to meet extraordinary people.

There is no denying that the Housing situation is dire, and the application and relocating process a sheer test of patience. But scattered amongst this gloom are little rays of sunshine (I couldn't think of a less cheesy expression) who not only make this process successful, but I believe are the reason the miraculous opportunities arise.

Thanks to the dedication and good intention of workers and the family-like teamwork between co-workers, HAAG have managed such miracles as housing one lady within two weeks and 2 people within a record 2 days!

But the real praise needs to go to the beautiful souls who allow us to be so intensively involved in their lives at such a fragile time, for giving us their trust and cooperation during an acutely stressful period and for sharing their truly remarkable stories.

The ACHA program is a fantastic initiative supported by a network of true community workers who support each other to achieve amazing results for some equally amazing people.

Youthful un-jaded naivety? I prefer to think of it as faith.

RESEARCH PROJECTS.

HAAG is currently involved in a number of exciting and important research projects and we are looking for volunteers to participate in the following projects. If you are interested in participating in any of these projects or would like further information please contact April at HAAG on 9654 7389.

Ageing in What Place? The experiences of housing crisis and homelessness for older Victorians study.

Hanover and HAAG are conducting research into the impact of location and gender on older Victorians' housing pathways. Working across all Victorian Department of Human Services regions, we will examine the similarities and differences in service responses to older men and women experiencing housing crisis and homelessness across metropolitan and rural areas. We are looking for the input of men and women aged over 55 and who have recently experienced housing crisis or homelessness. The purpose of the research is to better understand which services and service responses can prevent older people from entering housing crisis and homelessness. Information will be obtained from an individual interview, all information will be treated as confidential and participants will not be identified in the research

Health and housing – older women on the margins.

The City of Boroondara, with the support of Monash University, is undertaking a research project which aims to examine the health and social issues that impact on older women that place them at risk of or led to them becoming homeless. The catalyst for the project was anecdotal reports of an increase in the number of older women seeking housing assistance in the Eastern Metropolitan Region, and in particular the municipality of Boroondara. This is the third stage of the research and it will concentrate on the future level of homelessness risk for this group of women and identify how the service system and community can effectively respond to this ever increasing problem. We are seeking the input of women aged over 55 years who have been at risk of homelessness in the last 12 months and who are currently living or who have lived in the City of Boroondara in the past 2 years.

Kensington public housing estate redevelopment.

Did you live on the Kensington public housing estate before the redevelopment? Would you like to be involved in a research project looking at the Kensington public housing estate redevelopment? A team of three researchers at the University of Melbourne is looking to interview residents who lived on the estate before and after the redevelopment. The interviews will explore what it was like living on the estate before the redevelopment, compared to your current experience, and will form an important part of a broad evaluation of the Kensington estate redevelopment and its tenancy management model. The research team consists of Dr. Kate Shaw as principal researcher and Dr. Peter Raisbeck and Chris Chaplin as co-researchers. They will be collecting information using various methods, including; a voluntary and anonymous questionnaire to be delivered to all residents currently living on the estate; interviews with current residents who give permission for them to contact them; with residents who were relocated during the redevelopment but didn't return to the estate; with local community organisations, traders, council, police etc and general financial and population information supplied by the Office of Housing, Urban Communities (the property managers) and Becton (the developers).

SENIORS WEEK HAAG EVENT - 5 OCTOBER 2011

This year we held an information session and film viewing as part of our Seniors Week event at Ross House.

We showed our film *Ageing on the Edge* and provided opportunities for people to gather information and ask questions directly to HAAG staff. There was a lot of interest and as a result of the session we were able to assist a few of the attendees.

Consumer Affairs Victoria are currently calling for submissions in response to their *Retirement Villages discussion paper: Contract and information disclosure options*.

To access a copy go to:
www.consumer.vic.gov.au
or phone them on 1300 55 81 81

STUDENT PLACEMENT

My name is MengNi Deng and NiNi for short. I am an undergraduate social work student at RMIT University. I came to Australia in 2005 and spent two years in Hobart finishing my high school education at Hobart College. After that I went to the University of Melbourne to study Psychology for three years. I enjoyed Psychology. Psychology studies the human mind and behaviour by both establishing general principles and researching specific cases but I believe that every human being is unique. Our behaviours are influenced by the social environment surrounding us. So I decided to study social work after I graduated and here I am, on my first placement with HAAG.

I am enjoying my placement so much. HAAG is a wonderful organisation. All the workers are full of passion. They work equally and supportively with each other. I feel welcomed and supported by everyone, and I don't know if I can ever find another supervisor that is more warm-hearted, patient and helpful than Ena. I have learned a lot about a social workers' role and how to use theories in practice by observation and assertion in and out of the office. Thank you all very much!

As each day passes I become more interested in becoming an aged care worker. I grew up very close to my grandparents, so I always felt attached to elders. I want to help them as much as I can. I have assisted Ena and April with cases that involve Chinese speaking clients and I'm doing research on how senior non-English speaking groups access social services in Victoria.

Parks and villages residents' news

I am a resident who lives in a caravan park in Chelsea Heights, where I have lived for the past 15 years.

Up until recently I owned my own unit but rented the land on which it stood. I had to sell the unit when the owners of the park told me and 17 other owners the land was going to be redeveloped and we had to vacate. I was given 90 days to sort out my situation and as a result sold my unit at a great loss. Only 5 of the 18 owners were able to relocate their units. The remaining owners sold and six residents, including me, were lucky enough to be able to rent a cabin in the other part of the park while the rest had to leave. We were provided with some financial compensation which has been helpful during a stressful time.

It has been a big worry to all the owners asked to leave as we all thought we would be able to live in the park for many years to come.

My thoughts are with other owners living in caravan parks and villages who have been served notices to vacate. It is a difficult situation that I hope no one else has to experience. This is why I wanted to write this article—to make people aware that this can happen and that we need better protection for parks and villages residents. To everyone at HAAG and all residents living in caravan parks and residential villages I wish you all the best for Christmas and hope you have a happy new year!

Robin Hutton

Part 4A implementation update

HAAG has been rolling out information sessions since July to parks and villages residents about the introduction of Part 4A into the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, which provides better protections for residents that own their dwelling but lease/rent the land on which it stands.

To date 17 parks/villages have been visited across Victoria.

This represents about 10–15% of residents state-wide with an average turnout of 70 residents per session and approximately 1110 residents in total attending so far.

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) have supported our implementation process with a CAV representative attending 12 out of 17 sessions organised.

Of the 17 sessions 6 were also organised in conjunction with a residents' committee and out of the roll out 3 residents' committees have been formed.

It has been a very successful project and we hope to continue informing residents about their rights under the new part of the Act.

ILU RESIDENT NEWS

The voice of the Independent Living Units working group

Our November meeting reviewed our months of conversations to write a concise Log of Claims which will be sent out to as many individuals and organisations as possible, including Government departments, Ministers, Retirement villages and NGO's.

“Our future happiness comes down to how ILU's are managed”

The following are some of the main points we seek which will go in our statement:

ACCESS TO RIGHTS INFORMATION:

A specific booklet on the rights of all residents of ILU's from Consumer Affairs Victoria [CAV] with enforceable legislation on the provision of these by village operators so as they comply CAV booklet to be more appropriate, photos reflecting diversity and more positive and proactive statements

Clear statements that residents have rights with protective parts of the Acts in simple language
Community education with residents involved in the implementation of sessions.

ACCESS TO DISPUTE RESOLUTION, ADVOCACY & THE LEGAL SYSTEM:

Recognition of HAAG, and Resident's committees as a means of dispute resolution and support and promotion of these avenues.

Encouragement and education of ILU management to support this process.

Availability of active legal services, support and advice.

Clear internal and external dispute resolution procedures.

A dedicated, independent person to hear disputes.

LEGAL CLARITY OF THE SECTOR:

Clarity on resident's coverage by *Retirement Villages Act 1986* and *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* as some villages have both.

Clear statements by organisations of their legal coverage and management in order for residents to understand their rights

Standard agreements for all ILU's be they “pay to go in” or “rental”

Retirement villages list at VCAT for quick and legally specific resolution of issues.

Retirement village Commissioner or Ombudsman.

A Retirement Housing Act covering all forms of retirement housing as neither Act is wholly appropriate, and the inclusion of clear definitions of “not-for-profit” and “ILU's”

MANAGEMENT CULTURE:

Consultation and inclusion of residents in decision making on matters to do with the village environment, fees, incomings, rules, privacy and safety.

Management accountability to create equity.

Clear obligations, procedures and dispute resolution procedures.

Clear communication by Managers

Clear maintenance log books to be kept and monitored.

A standard fee structure which includes the same items at all villages for equity.

A giant thankyou to Shanny and Jeff for all their support and work on our behalf .

In December we will be planning for next year and sharing some Christmas cheer.

We wish everybody a very happy Christmas and a safe and health New Year.

Sally Stabback, working group member

Thoughts of an ILU resident

As an ILU resident myself, and a working group member, I believe that all ILU residents:

- Need to be treated with dignity and respect
- Deserve to live without discrimination or victimisation and without having to feel obliged or grateful for the roof over their head
- Are entitled to privacy and personal space
- Are entitled to continue their cultural and religious practices, including their language of origin, without discrimination
- Are entitled to select and maintain social and personal relationships without fear
- Have freedom of speech
- Need to be consulted and involved in decision making within the units
- Must have access to information about their rights
- Must have access to advocates and legal advice and support if the need arises
- Deserve to be free from reprisal if they choose to exercise their rights
- Should respect the rights of other residents within the units

Most of all when someone is handed the key to their unit I believe they are entitled to come and go as they please, to have visitors whenever they like and to utilise their space for their enjoyment, leisure and peace.

Whether it be kicking up your heels, laughing out loud, throwing a dinner party or curling up with a good book a resident should be able to do as they please in their unit.

But you get out of an ILU what you put in.

Anyone with a library and a garden wants for nothing.

Joy

**The ILU working group has their last 2011 meeting on
Wednesday 7 December.**

**The Parks and Villages working group has their last 2011 meeting
on Tuesday 6 December.**

To ALL working group members HAAG wishes you a Merry Christmas and Happy new year.

We will see you back in action in 2012!

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is an independent statutory body with responsibilities under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001*, and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

The Commission's core function is to receive and help resolve complaints about discrimination based on disability, age, sex, and race among other characteristics. Discrimination is against the law when it occurs in an area of public life including employment, accommodation, and access to goods and services. The Commission also helps resolve complaints about harassment, victimisation and vilification through our dispute resolution process.

As a Policy Officer at the Commission, I am involved in a range of projects including submissions, development of resources on age discrimination and older people's rights at work, and research on discrimination in the private rental market.

This year, the Commission is focussing on the rights of older people as part of its annual report on the operation of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. At a recent forum, we heard from members of the community as well as representatives of organisations about the key human rights issues facing older Victorians.

The Commission has also conducted a survey on the rights of older people and maintained an online discussion forum. If you would like to contribute to the Commission's ongoing discussion about the rights of older people, you can do so by calling Adrian Bates on (03) 9032 3471 or emailing Adrian.Bates@veohrc.vic.gov.au

For more information about what the Commission does and the services it offers, go to our website at www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

If you would like to contact the Commission or make a complaint about discrimination, sexual harassment, victimisation or vilification you can do so using the details below:

1300 292 153

enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au

humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

Level 3, 204 Lygon Street, Carlton Vic 3053

Fax 1300 891 858

TTY 1300 289 621 (hearing impaired)

Interpreters 1300 152 494

Julian Alban, Policy Officer

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

*a chance for other hard
working individuals to share
and promote the work they
do.*

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Older Tenants' Voice

with Parks and Villages residents' news
and ILU residents' news!

**We need your stories, news and
information!**

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

We hope you can contribute to our first
newsletter for 2012 in March!

Send articles to:

2nd floor, Ross House,
247-251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, 3000

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

HAVE YOUR SAY!

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

2nd Floor, 247-251 Flinders Lane,
Melbourne 3000.

Ph: 9654 7389 (Melb. metro.)

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 (03) 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 web: www.oldertenants.org.au