



**December 2014  
Summer edition**

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



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





Hello members and friends.  
 Welcome to this edition of the newsletter.  
 I hope you find lots to interest and inform you this month.  
 As the new chair of the Committee of Management I look forward to a year of hard work with the new HAAG committee and the wonderful hardworking people at HAAG and HAL.  
 We all wish you a Merry Christmas and a great New Year!

*Vicki*



HAAG's newly elected Committee of Management (left and below) for 2014-2015.

Let us introduce you:

Photo above (from left to right):

- Kris Spark
- 'Siva' Nallaratnam
- Daisy Ellery
- Gordon Beard - Vice Chairperson
- Maree Norris - Treasurer
- Vicki Gutsjahr - Chairperson
- Bob Brooks
- Joan Lansbury
- Sue Leigh - Secretary
- Phyll Williams

Front cover photo:  
 Bob Brooks - HAAG CoM  
 Katie Stoll - Ross House

Photo below includes Meredith Munro also a committee member

Sally Stabback also a committee member (absent).

'Person of Expertise' nominated onto the committee – Alicia Strobbe (absent).





## **HAAG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 13 November 2014**

Housing for the Aged Action Group held its Annual General Meeting on Thursday 13th November. There were two key highlights for the day: Firstly, HAAG elected a new management committee that saw a number of new people stepping forward to take on responsibility for the running of the organisation. This included a new Chairperson in Vicki Gutsjahr who has been a long standing member of HAAG's Independent Living Units Working Group and assumes the leadership at a critical time in HAAG's future. Thank you to HAAG's past Chairperson Pauline Williamson who performed the duties admirably over the previous year.

The new management committee is: Victoria Gutsjahr (Chairperson), Gordon Beard (Vice Chairperson), Sue Leigh (Secretary), Maree Norris (Treasurer), Bob Brooks, Daisy Ellery, Joan Lansbury, Siva Nallaratnam, Kris Spark, Sally Stabback, Meredith Munro, Phyll Williams, Alicia Strobbe. Congratulations to the new committee as it takes on our considerable challenges for the next year.

Jeff Fiedler presented the Annual Report. Combined with April Bragg as co-Managers, they thanked the HAAG membership and Home at Last staff for their hard work over the year. Considerable achievements included the continued funding of Home at Last from stage 1 to stage 2 as an Innovations Action Project; the holding of the Surviving or Thriving? Older People at Risk of Homelessness Forum, significant input into the future Aged Care Reforms and the importance of the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program, the preparation of our housing policy platform for the Victorian state election and the amazing actions by our Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages (CARPAU), Independent Living Units (ILU) and Private Renters Working Groups.

Fantastic presentations were given by working group members Lionel Foster, Joan Lansbury and Phyll Williams. Phyll's speech was wide ranging and touched many notes that represented the spirit of the occasion and so we have included excerpts from her speech in this edition of the newsletter.

Fionnuala wound things up with a rallying call for members to get involved in the Private Renters Working Group Mark 2 that will assume a new name, purpose and planned actions for 2015. So watch this space!

A delicious lunch followed as members enjoyed the fruits of the occasion!



## Home at Last update...

The Home at Last service has reached an important milestone in its operation. For the past two and a half years Home at Last has built a highly effective service that has assisted hundreds of older people to move from insecure and expensive private rental accommodation and move into long term affordable housing. In each newsletter we have provided you with progress reports on Home at Last and examples of some of the people who have been assisted. It has become really clear that Home at Last has become an important part of the housing and homelessness service sector and we are at a critical stage of its funding. With aims to address homelessness by introducing early intervention and prevention strategies Home at Last has shown that it is possible to provide affordable housing solutions for older people within a reasonable period of time.

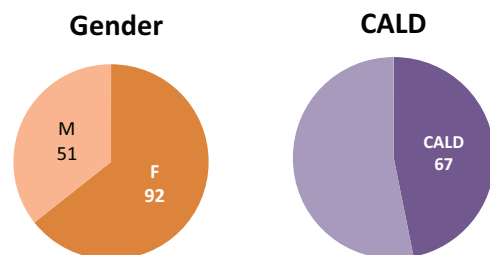
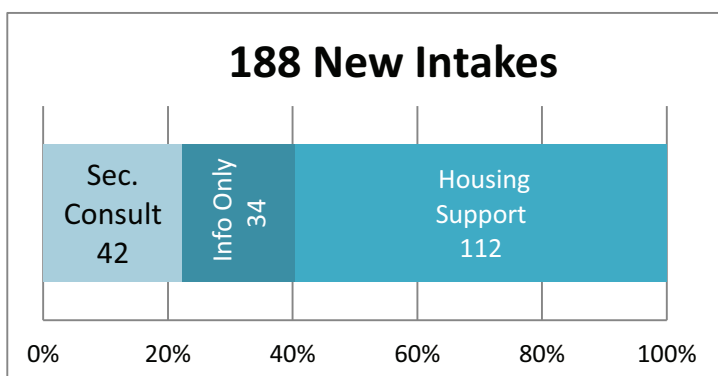
As we are moving to the end of 2014 the service is now only funded for a further six months and completes its work as one of the seven funded Innovations Action Projects in June 2015.

Over the past few months the state government has been finalising the evaluation of the service with the assistance of independent auditing agency KPMG. We are now beginning the process of negotiating with the government for the service to become a permanent part of the homelessness service landscape. However there are a number of obstacles in the way with a state election deciding who will be in government and then deciding if they are going to support Home at Last with a longer term funding package. As the months go by we will have to monitor our work carefully as we are finding the demands on our service are increasing significantly. If the government does not soon commit to supporting Home at Last we will have to start making difficult decisions as to whether we can keep operating as we cannot make promises to help people if the funding is going to be stopped in the near future.

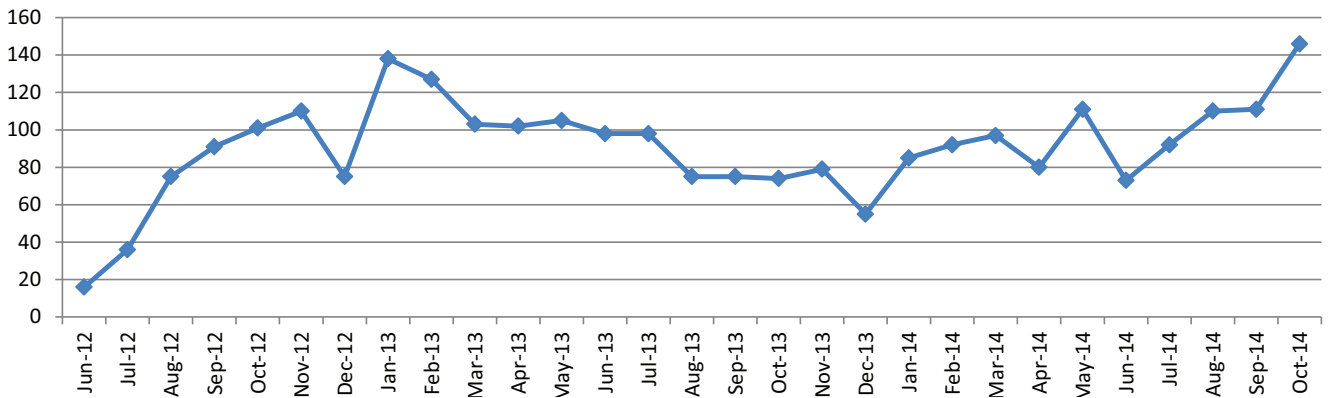
Demands on the services keep on growing.

Over the past few months the number of older people seeking our help has been increasing dramatically. The table below shows the numbers of new clients who contacted Home at Last during October. There are a number of key results here:

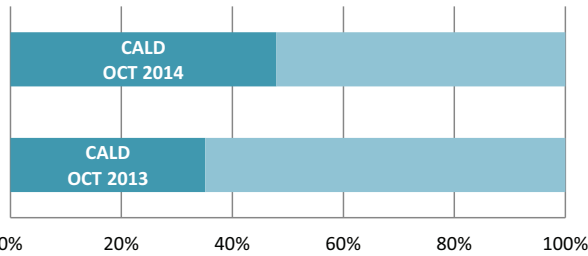
Our numbers have doubled on average, there are even higher numbers of women seeking help, the proportion of older people from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Background has increased from about 30% up to 50% and the amount of funds expended on financial assistance per person has doubled, showing that many older people have been in poverty for long periods of time as they have worn out appliances such as fridges, washing machines and beds. Provision of new appliances and beds, along with long term affordable housing, provides an essential new beginning for older people to be able to live a future with dignity and keep their costs down.



## INTAKES Jun 2012 - Oct 2014

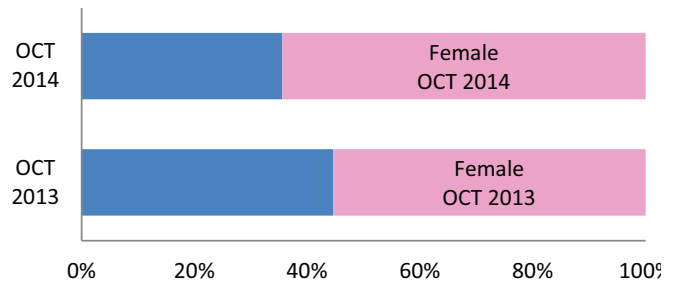


### CALD client ratio to hit 50%



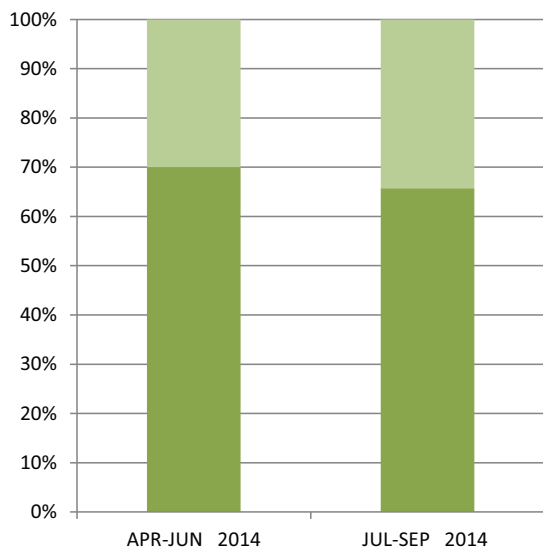
|       | OCT 2013 | OCT 2014 |
|-------|----------|----------|
| CALD  | 26       | 70       |
| Other | 48       | 76       |

### Proportion of Female clients continues to increase

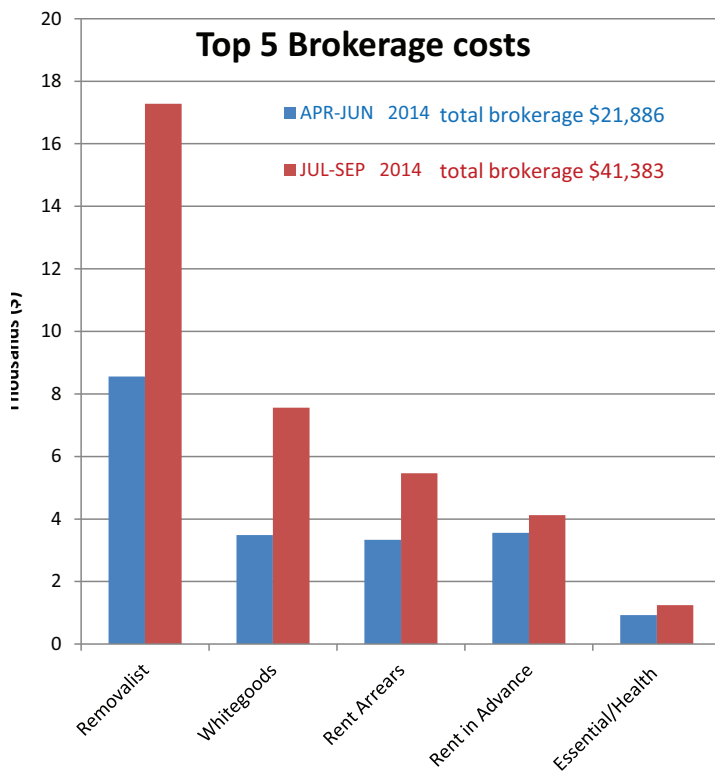


### Time to rehouse stable around 70% within 3 months

■ within 3 months   ■ over 3 months



### Top 5 Brokerage costs



## Regional Office of Housing Visit

In September this year, two of Home At Last's housing support workers had the opportunity to travel to the Sale Office of Housing and visit a property in the area. Usually those who phone Home At Last from outside of Melbourne are referred to a local service for housing assistance, however we were contacted by an individual whose situation was both complex and urgent and so we supported them to transition from the substandard bungalow in which they were boarding to an Office of Housing property before they became homeless.

Because of the Office of Housing's 'limited demand' properties in the Sale area, we were able to achieve an offer for the client within 15 days of submitting their application. And through negotiation, they were able to access a unit which suited their specific health and wellbeing needs. From the initial offer being made, it was then just over three weeks before we went with the client to sign up and begin moving their belongings into their new, permanent property.

For staff at an organisation in Melbourne's CBD, it was definitely out of the ordinary to take a day trip to Sale, and then to the client's new property in Maffra. In fact neither of us had ever visited a Housing office or property outside of metropolitan Melbourne. And while some things were the same, others definitely were not.

The staff at the Sale Office of Housing were particularly relaxed and very accommodating to the needs and concerns of their new tenant. They seemed to understand that being at risk of homelessness for the first time later in life is extremely stressful, and their attitudes made the process easier.

In regards to the block of units we visited in Maffra, we were puzzled as to why they were limited demand. They were at least as well designed and maintained as any we had come across in Melbourne. Our client entered their freshly painted and carpeted unit, fitted with a new oven and stove, and was delighted to find that their own enclosed courtyard and garden stretched around the back and side of the unit. While the block housed about 18 units, it was sufficiently spacious and well designed for each resident to have their own space and privacy. After inspecting the property, we took a short walk around the block and discovered several cafes before reaching Maffra's main street. Our client was equally please to not have to drive to do the grocery shopping.

This experience was one of our most positive with the Office of Housing, and provided the tenant with what most of Home At Last's clients want – a well maintained, ground floor unit with a private courtyard, in a quiet street, and still walking distance to shops and local amenities.





## Regional meetings with residential park and village residents

HAAG organised two meetings were held in regional areas over the past three months. The aim of the meetings was to increase information sharing and social connectedness among residents living in residential parks and villages.

The hope was that the more connected people became the more likely they would be to begin meeting regularly and working in collaboration with HAAG's CARPAU working group on the broader law and policy reforms.

On the Mornington Peninsula a group of residents, from 5 different parks/villages, meet monthly and have obtained a grant from the Mornington Peninsula Shire to encourage information sharing and social connectedness among residents on the Peninsula. The grant is auspiced by HAAG.

The goal is that other regions will do similar work into the future and residents of residential parks and villages will begin to have a stronger voice and profile in Victoria, with representation from all parts of the State.

The first meeting was held in Morwell, in the Gippsland region, on 24 September 2014 where we had approximately 40 residents attend from 5 different parks/villages. It was a very lively meeting with in-depth discussions about rights and responsibilities. Quantum Support Services and the local Consumer Affairs Victoria office attended as guest speakers to let people know about local supports available to them. Peninsula group representatives also attended to talk about their experiences starting their group. Residents expressed that it had been a very worthwhile and informative session.

The second meeting was held in Shepparton, in the Hume region, on 8 October 2014 where we had approximately 25 residents attend from 3 different parks/villages. Rural Housing Network Limited and the local Consumer Affairs Victoria office also attended to speak to people about how to access local support services. CARPAU members also attended to talk about their experiences working within the working group. Again the discussions were lively and focused primarily on concerns that people were having and how best to deal with them moving forward.

Both meetings allowed residents to connect to other people living in the same type of housing and the hope is that people can begin to work together to overcome some of their larger issues and concerns.



Left: Gippsland meeting  
Right: CARPAU members in Shepparton



Left: Shepparton meeting

## Independent Living Units (LU) working group



2014 has been a very busy year for the ILU working group. We have spent time planning for the future and have made the most of the upcoming election (at the time of typing the election had not yet been conducted) undertaking lots of lobbying, both as a group and individually.

The members of the group have turned up each month at Ross House to meet. HAAG would like to thank the ILU group for their commitment throughout this year and looks forward to continuing the journey into 2015!

Here is what the ILU members said about their experience being a part of the working group in 2014:

*ILU could also refer to Intelligence, Learning and Understanding because those are aspects of what we believe we are trying to do in our work group. Intelligence is the spreading and/or sharing of information to improve the rights and protections of aged residents in an ILU or Not for profit (NFP) retirement village. Learning especially in relation to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Retirement Villages Act. The group's major aim is to have a review of the retirement village sector and legislation. We've learned first-hand of much inadequate treatment of residents and are proud of the many years of advocacy by HAAG personnel in this sphere. In the last few months the ILU working group has strongly brought these messages to the state politicians who face election time soon. So far we can only hope the polities listened.*

*Understanding is what most people probably wish for daily. Concerns voiced by many residents range from lack of standards in management, ignorance of, or lack of, clear rights and protections, difficulty for residents in accessing justice and dispute resolution, and various other actions that deny the dignity and/or rights of older tenants or residents.*

*Phyll, aulfield*

*HAAG helped me get suitable accommodation which improved my lifestyle. It was a privilege to put something back by joining the ILU group and maybe helping someone else in the same position.*

*It has been a very informative and interesting year 2014 and hopefully we will be able to achieve more in 2015.*

*Kathy, madate*

*Working with the ILU group has given me a lot of information and the confidence to pass it on to other people. I hope it will extend into 2015.*

*Vicki, Caulfield*

*We have many brisk and vivacious conversatons abut legislation ad rights. We need t continue this cmplex work and have the funding to do it!*

*Sally, netty*

*I am very happy with HAAG and what they achieved on behalf of me and my wife in the short time I have been a member. I sincerely hope the work will continue and funding will be achieved over the next few months. the ILU working group is a good medium and provides older people with an outlet.*

*Barney, ra La*

*Coming to the working group once a month is uplifting for me. Other members have great ideas and to me this year has been a learning experience. Lobbying my State MP on behalf of HAAG was a good and hopeful experience. I hope HAAG gets funding to continue their great work next year and in the future.*

*Bep, meSille*



## Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages (CARPAU) working group

The CARPAU group has worked extremely hard this year, undertaking strong lobbying as a group in conjunction with HAAG, as well as individually.

The group has almost reached its 10 year anniversary and still strives for reform with just as much passion as their early days.

Members have come and gone but our core group meet every month at Ross House and are truly committed to seeing positive changes in this sector.

HAAG would like to thank CARPAU members for their determination and commitment, during 2014 but also over the past few years. Let us hope the upcoming election brings with it some focused and purposeful work for us into 2015!

Here is what some of the CARPAU members said about their experience being a part of the working group in 2014:

*I believe the year has been successful, mainly due to having to produce the vision of the future for "Land/Lease" occupants and being able to put our views to new government stakeholders. Other significant actions include:*

*Formation of a sub-committee to review Electricity supply and usage charges. This could be employed for other problem areas. Field trips to the Mornington Peninsula and Shepparton were very valuable and should continue in 2015*

*Finally I hope that some influence can be affected regarding clarity on Site leasing arrangements and security of tenure for new residents entering into existing Land/Lease facilities.*

Gordon, Peter

*I have enjoyed the meetings for the last twelve months. The group has achieved a lot. From their concerns and objectives policies were introduced. The approaches to politicians and parties was first class. Then members also travelled into the rural areas to promote the groups activities.*

*Next year we need to follow up with the government early and have constant action to get improved conditions for residents and parks.*

*We do not want a lack of action in the future, like what has happened before.*

Russell, Glenroy

*The need to pursue improved legislation for our type of accommodation has been made obvious by the group. Perhaps consideration should be given to identifying key issues such as (tenure building codes and utilities) and concentrating on convincing the authorities of the critical need for improvement in those areas.*

John and Jackie, Cowes

*My wife and I joined the group approx. 4 years ago, attending as often as possible. The Group is led by M/s. Shanny Gordon, (H.A.A.G.), and was continually informed of all current information concerning Residents of Parks and Villages, also being made aware of any Action or Direction taken by H.A.A.G. on such matters. It was also interesting to hear, in general discussion, how most issues discussed were a common matter experienced by most Park and Village Residents. A very rewarding experience was when it was proposed (by Treasury) to increase G.S.T., that a United effort by many groups and individuals, was able to halt such proposal taking effect. My wife and I enjoy and "Learn" from every attendance at every CARPAU Meetings.*

Ian and Barbara, Hastings



## CARPAU members comments continued:

I only joined the Working Group early 2014 and very much with L plates on!!!!

I have learnt there are many serious problems in Relocatable Villages.

I would like to see the Government legislate that all dwellings be brought under the Uniform Building Codes Regulations, making Owners of the Villages more accountable.

Also that Part 4A agreements are presented at time of purchase and understood by prospective buyers.

All rent increases or adjustments to be C.P.I. costed.

All office staff to be fully trained in management procedures and importantly public relations procedures.

Get the Policies off the shelf and into action.

Lynn, raralzon



The 2014 year with the working group has indeed been productive with our log of claims being put together and submitted to both major parties in a very satisfactory manner. We will know after Saturday's election to whom we will now have to keep on top of and hopefully glean something from the positive reactions we received in the way of legislation for Victorian Caravan Parks and Lifestyle villages.

I have learnt that the problems are many and varied from village to village but we must keep focused on the big picture for the benefit of everyone. To this effect I think that in 2015 we must continue our good work but with a greater emphasis on the media in order to broaden our message. We must also bring together areas such as the Mornington Peninsula and country areas, to give us a bigger presence and a louder voice.

Roger, polabo

What kind of man takes \$5,500 from a 90-year-old pensioner?

Nesta is 90 years old. She lived in a private rental property for six years and every month she unknowingly overpaid her rent. It was only a small amount each month, but nobody ever told her she was paying too much so it added up over time. It was only when she gave notice that she was moving out that she found out – almost by accident – that she'd overpaid her rent by \$5,435.36.

Nesta came to Home At Last because her landlord refused to pay her back the money he owed her. The first time I met her I explained the process that we would have to go through to get her money back and warned that it could be long, slow, and draining; was she prepared to go through all that? She told me she was ready for a fight.

Here you can see Nesta holding a cheque for the full amount. It took a lot of work but Nesta stuck to her guns and got back everything she was owed. I asked what she would do with the money and she told me she wasn't sure because she'd never had so much money at one time before. Whatever she decides, we wish her all the best. And if your landlord owes you money, please give us a call and we'll see what we can do to help you get it back.

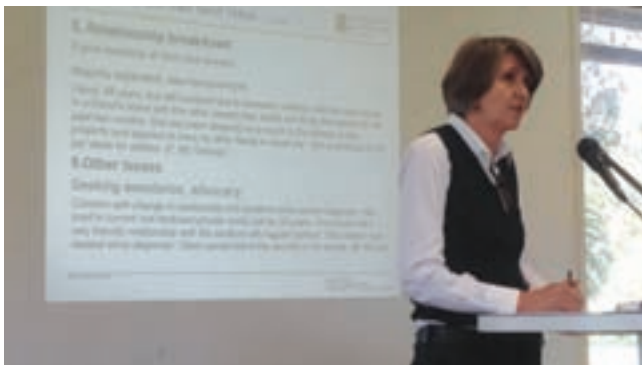


**The Hume Homelessness Forum entitled *Home 'til Stumps* was held on Thursday 9th October 2014 in Benalla. About 90 people came along from a range of housing, health and aged care services across the central and north east regions of Victoria. The aim of the day was to raise awareness of the problems faced by older people at risk of homelessness and look at the issues from the perspective of older people in rural and regional Victoria.**

**The line up of speakers included Dr Maree Petersen from the University of Queensland, Jeff Fiedler from HAAG, Tanya Atkinson from Wintringham and Laura Simpson from Rural Housing Network. The most outstanding speaker was HAAG member Joan Lansbury who talked about her own experience facing homelessness and then finding long term social housing that has changed her life and health for the better.**

**In the afternoon the audience got involved in workshops that looked at strategies for helping older people at risk of homeless in country areas. A number of health and aged care services spoke about the number of city based older people moving to isolated rural areas to find cheaper rental accommodation. They then find that they are removed from services they need and struggle to adjust.**

**The forum was organised by the Hume Region Homelessness Network and the key worker who established the event was Jan Armstrong who is the Hume Region Homelessness Networker. Jan did an amazing job in developing the forum that also included a lot of publicity on the issues facing older people in the regional media. This included interviews on ABC radio and a number of regional newspapers. So congratulations Jan on a job well done to raise the profile of older renters in Victoria.**



**Left: Dr Maree Peterson  
Below: Joan Lansbury with Jan Armstrong  
Bottom left: The HAAG group that attended the Hume forum enjoying a meal together in Benalla.**





## **Surviving or Thriving – Older People at Risk of Homelessness Eastern Health and Housing Forum**

**On Monday 17th November 2014 HAAG co-hosted a forum with the Eastern branch of the Department of Health Home and Community Care (HACC) Department on the issue of older people at risk of homelessness. About fifty people from a range of health and aged care agencies came to the event to look at ways that they can better identify housing problems faced by older people they are visiting. For example, home care providers who are assisting older people with meals and cleaning are in a prime position to hear from people whether they are having trouble with the rent, repairs that need doing, or might be facing eviction because the owner is planning to renovate or sell the person's home.**

**This event was started by collaborating with Dale Park, a HACC Diversity Advisor for the Department of Health. The role of the Diversity Advisors is to ensure that vulnerable older people are receiving the services they need. This could refer to older people who are not receiving home care when they need it or it may include people needing help with other services, including housing assistance.**

**So the forum's main intention was to explore ways that health, aged care and housing services could work together to better identify and address the needs of older people who may be at risk of homelessness.**

**Some of the key outcomes of the day were:**

- **Improve the assessment processes when older people are being interviewed for aged care services. This would include additional questions about a client's rental affordability and asking about other housing problems.**
- **Providing opportunities for talks to be given to staff groups at each aged care service.**
- **Possibility of identifying, from data collected by agencies, the people receiving aged care service who are living in private rental housing. This could enable Home at Last information to be sent directly to people so they can begin the process of considering better long term affordable housing options.**

**Key speakers for the day were Michelene Keyte from SalvoCare Eastern region, Jeff Fiedler from Home at Last and most importantly, HAAG member Joan Lansbury who talked about the importance of a good home from her personal perspective.**

**Home at Last is working with health and aged care agencies across Victoria to ensure that housing is recognised as a vital part of good quality aged care in the home.**





Happy  
Holidays!



**HAAG will be taking a break over the holidays. Our office will be closed, and our phones will be answering machine mode, from:**

**24 December 2014**

**until**

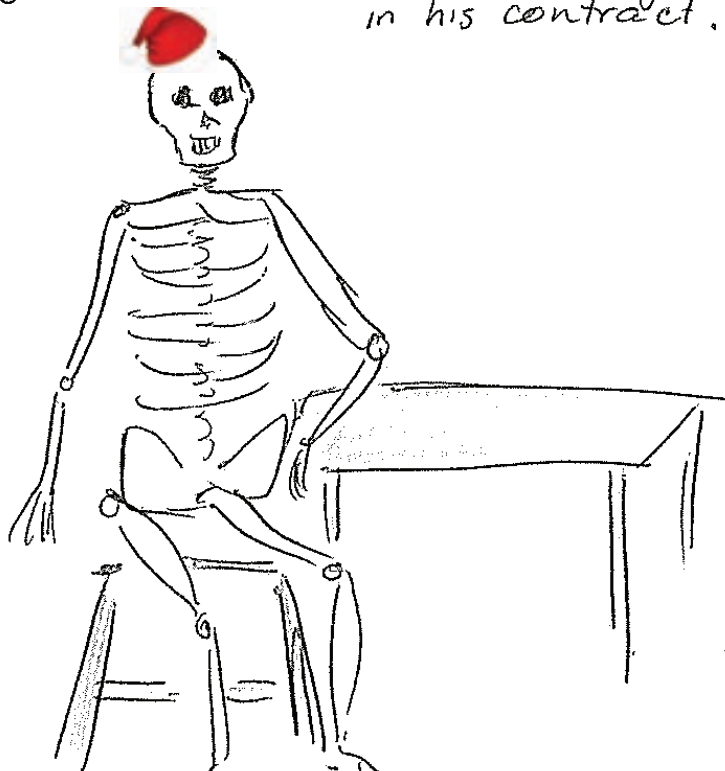
**1 January 2015.**

**The service will be back on 2 January 2015.**

**From all of the HAAGies we wish you a happy holiday season, a Merry Xmas, a happy Chanukah and a festive New Year!**



Aged person discovers a "50 year lease"  
in his contract.



I'm not leaving until my contract  
expires.

By: Vicki G

## **Bendigo Seniors Get to “Know their Rights” at Switched on Seniors Morning and Afternoon Teas 17th and 18th November 2014**

**In May 2014 Fionnuala Spillane and Gemma White, Community Education Workers from Housing for the Aged Action Group, Arati Vidyasagar, Information Outreach Officer, Seniors Information Victoria and Angela Costi, Senior Community Legal Education Coordinator, Victoria Legal Aid met to discuss how the three organisations could work collaboratively.**

**After discussing a few ideas the groups decided to trial rights-based information sessions for older people, delivered in a relaxed atmosphere over a cup of tea. It was agreed to pilot the sessions in Bendigo and so planning commenced for Know your Rights for Switched on Seniors.**

**Four events were held over two days, with morning or afternoon tea, fresh fruit and scones being offered to people attending. The first events were held in the main Bendigo library as it is a very central location, a new building that was becoming an important meeting place. The second day's events were in Rotary Gateway Park out in Kangaroo Flat, a suburb of Bendigo about 5km from the city centre. It is well serviced by a local bus and has a large car parking area.**

**In early October advertising for the events commenced. Invitations were mailed out to over 100 organisations and individuals, many of whom had been contacted in relation to Housing Options presentations HAAG held in early 2013. Emails were sent to a further 100 organisations and individuals which was repeated in the week prior to the events.**

**HAAG staff visited Bendigo on four occasions prior to the events to visit local organisations. In a discussion with Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative it was arranged for Aunty Lyn Warren to deliver an acknowledgement of Country at all four events.**



**The Group at Session 1: 18/11/2014. Everyone had a great time and got to know their neighbours as well.**



**A Victoria Legal Aid worker chatting to one of the tables at a Kangaroo Flat session.**





**Ruth Hosking featured in the Bendigo Advertiser talking about “Switched on Seniors”**



**Session 1 at the Bendigo Library with 35 attendees**

**In efforts to attract media attention HAAG staff emailed local radio, TV and newspaper outlets a month before the events. This was followed up with phone calls. This was repeated nearly two weeks out from the events. HAAG staff also called in to local media outlets when visiting Bendigo.**

**The Bendigo Advertiser ran an article featuring Ruth Hosking on November 12th. Ruth was interviewed on ABC Central radio. Gemma White from HAAG was interviewed on KLFM on Tuesday 11th November. All of these sources were mentioned by different people attending the events.**

#### **Service Providers**

**The following people agreed to attend the events and be available to provide information.**

**John Roberts, member of Bendigo Council’s Positive Ageing Committee and volunteer  
Audrey Drechsler, member of Bendigo Council’s Positive Ageing Committee and volunteer  
Robyn Warren ‘Zoom’ Editor and member of Bendigo Council’s Positive Ageing Committee and volunteer**

**Ruth Hosking, member of Bendigo Council’s Positive Ageing Committee and Volunteer of the year (awarded by Leading Aged Services Australia). She is also a member of the organising committee for the Central Cluster Uniting Church’s Forum “Retirement Accommodation – what are your options?, “ Community & Residential Care Provider’s Admission Enquiry Officer**

**Arati Vidyasagar, Information Outreach Officer, Seniors Information Vic, COTA**

**Angela Costi, Senior Community Legal Education Coordinator - Community Engagement, Civil Justice, Access & Equity, Victoria Legal Aid**

**Shanny Gordon, Retirement Housing Worker with Housing for the Aged Action Group**

**Gemma White, Community Education Worker with HAAG**

**Fionnuala Spillane, Community Education Worker with HAAG**

**Caroline Granger, Community Lawyer for Seniors Rights Victoria Program and Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre**

**Renee Wilson, Senior Lawyer, Bendigo office of Victoria Legal Aid (morning)**

**Debra Nicholl, Senior Educator and Advocate, Elder Rights Advocacy**

**Brendan Dunn, Consumer Affairs Victoria. Brendan is as a Regional Officer and Residential Tenancies Inspector.**

**Madeline Ryan, Community Legal Education Coordinator, Victoria Legal Aid**

**Louise Clancy- Mediator, Dispute Settlement, Bendigo**

**Erin Murray, Community Legal Education Coordinator, Victoria Legal Aid**

**Kenton Molloy, Community Legal Information Coordinator, Victoria Legal Aid**

**Nickie King, Lawyer, Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre**

(Bendigo Seniors sessions continued...)

**Attendees:**

The approximate number of attendees for each session was:

17/11/2014: Morning Session: 35, Afternoon Session: 20

18/11/2014: Morning Session: 20, Afternoon Session: 20

**Evaluation: How was it for you Bendigo?**

Following the four sessions, attendees were asked to write feedback about their experiences on a white board or on paper that we later put on the board. We have featured some of what people wrote below:



Arati from COTA and Gemma from HAAG with our Service Provider feedback board.



The Feedback board from Sessions 1 and 2 in the Bendigo Libabry

## Participant Feedback:

INFORMATION VERY HELPFULL  
AND GIVE ME A GREATER UNDERSTANDING  
OF WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE TO OLDER PEOPLE

- Very helpful. Excellent!
- Most informative
- Well done people!
- Excellent!! very informative and helpful
- I didn't learn much, but I've got lots of information for the CWA
- Thanks for a very informative and helpful afternoon. Answering many questions afraid to ask.
- Found this session most helpful thank you. Hope it will be held again in the future.
- Paper to write would be useful
- Today has been helpful to catch up on rules that have been changed. Many useful things have been discussed. Thank you all.
- Very differently presented. Gives one confidence in our bureaucracy.

Very Informative  
Excellent INFORMATION  
Meeting nice people  
Phone numbers exchanged  
how I will join U3A.

- Very well done. Very appreciated.  
We've all the cards and know who to ring.
- I'm off to U3A with a bag of goodies to encourage people to come tomorrow (participant on day 1)
- Very good. Informative. A lot of it doesn't apply to us.  
The legal side was very good. Services should think about providing services at half-way houses, especially legal and wills.
- Great idea. Good session. People will talk easier in smaller groups.



I watched every moment of the memorial service for Gough Whitlam. If like me you listened to the speeches honouring him and the work of his government you'll know what was said related to caring for the needs of ALL people of this country the young, the elderly, the newly married, of all colours, creeds and beliefs, was his government's priority.

Other people listening could have been thinking "but what did he do for roads, city freeways and traffic smoothing, etc." Those are the priorities today for both Federal and State governments but that's NOT the majority of people who need support these days. It's not the senior aged population seeking respect, dignity, and most of all affordable shelter the right of us all.

The workers at Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) know all about this. The State Government considers private rental accommodation appropriate for pensioners though it is neither secure nor affordable and landlords are under no obligation by law to allow for modifications where necessary. Appropriate! How? Where? Too bad if the once able working tenant now is retired and has need of a walking frame. They are the same person, just older, but now apparently easily targeted as disposable.

The wonderful workers who steer HAAG to the needs of older people on fixed incomes daily strive to fill a massive gap left by the lack of government attention to planning needs that impacts on senior citizens. Government cuts, state or federal, to the homelessness sector certainly affect older people who are being forced out of private rental situations, which in some cases has been their home for up to 30 years. (In my case 26 years).

**HOW DARE ANY GOVERNMENT IN THIS WONDERFUL COUNTRY UNCARINGLY PUT OLDER PEOPLE AT RISK OF BEING HOMELESS!? HOW DARE THEY STAND FOR ELECTION SPOUTING OFF ON WHAT THEY DID, NOW DO, AND PROMISE THEY WILL DO FOR THIS STATE! WHO AMONG THEM, LIBS OR LABS, IN THEIR SPEECHES HAVE SPOKEN OF RETIREMENT VILLAGES, PUBLIC HOUSING, SOCIAL HOUSING, NOT FOR PROFIT HOUSING LIKE INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS OR CARAVAN & RESIDENTIAL PARKS HOUSING? HOW DARE THEY TAKE OUR VOTES FOR GRANTED ?**

You here today all know what I mean, I'm sure. If I'm right you already live in any such arrangements.

I am a member of the HAAG Independent Living Unit (ILU) Working Group and also a resident of a Not for Profit (NFP) ILU complex owned by Catholic Homes Inc. The major aim of our ILU working group is to strongly prod state government to review the retirement village sector overall and the Retirement Villages Act 1986. (RVA) in particular.

You and I know the election date is looming for this state government. Under Shanny's excellent leadership the ILU Working Group set out a log of claims earlier this year. With that in hand we went off to interview, inform and involve as many politicians as possible. For several weeks we met them on their turf, even in Parliament House. Some days we went out in freezing cold mornings to catch trains that didn't arrive (another area of neglect of this Vic government).

We needed them all to hear and know that we, on behalf of all older people, wish to be key stakeholders. That whatever the government whichever Party after this November we want to know what are their intentions, AND we all want to be involved! We don't wish to hear rhetoric or weasel words from any of them either. And if you're thinking 'Not me' I am thinking 'Why not me, or you, or any other older person who may need support'. Who else knows our situations and feelings better?.

Consumer Affairs under Liberal have dropped off in process and operation. They ceased to engage to see compliance measures keep operating well and successfully. They've lost interest, apparently, in the needs of older people.

**Are we prepared to see this behaviour continue after the election?**

**How long can we expect HAAG to battle small minded political rulings and risky piecemeal funding on behalf of us, and all other aged people. People like us who are forced out of their now totally unaffordable housing to hope for a place in a retirement village, a NFP complex,**

a Caravan &/or Residential park, Public Housing, Social Housing, even a Boarding House situation.

All of you here today know, as do I, that there's plenty times we think we've had our day, fought other battles before now, maybe feel our old bones can do with a rest, let others take my place now, etc. etc. (Are you listening Molly?)

And as we also know there's not one worker at HAAG who would complain on their own behalf, or would EVER judge us for not doing our bit. But it's time we did.

This Victorian government needs to know what's needed next for our older people in relation to shelter and that we aren't just about couch sitting from now on.

On days when we do promotion at railway stations, or in Bourke Street Mall or such, and hand pamphlets to (mainly) older women who brush us off with 'oh no I own my own place', I think they are not so much sounding smug in a well groomed looking way as more amazed that anyone my age is spreading the word on protection from homelessness. In the main I feel they don't think there's any such risk to people our age.

As volunteers we all need to use a bigger voice. Not more volume just more voices; the voice of residents who will never get a truly fair deal while government ignores the need to clean up the law; while they ignore the need for intervention and training of managers, particularly in some ILUs and Caravan parks; ignores the value of organisations like HAAG and the truth of the numbers of older people who are now Home At Last thanks to the good work of HAAG; ignores the lack of legal clarity and the need for ongoing specialist training for such legal people to exhibit skills relating to disputes resolution and advocacy.

Whichever Party government minister gets Aged Care, Human Services, or Consumer Affairs after November and I URGE you all to be informed as to who he or she is when all the counting is done we could challenge him/her to enshrine rights in the Act. Really challenge the person to move beyond just monetary protection for cashed up residents and look at real concerns such as unsafe conditions due to the lack of maintenance, repairs and general living rights. Particularly look at neglected and ageing establishments.

To get any state government interested and engaged we need to work at getting informed first ourselves and then by swelling the numbers in the various work groups at HAAG.

This is 2014. Not blitz shattered London in 1940s. Homelessness then was a problem suffered by many. Shamefully, shamefully, it is now a growing problem in this land of plenty and this beautiful state because the Victorian Government doesn't provide enough affordable housing. Many Victorians do not even know of this mounting housing crisis for many of the aged of the population.

This election and the right to vote gives us an opportunity to be heard. It's up to us to make them listen on election day and beyond.

Written and spoken by Phyll Williams at the HAAG general meeting  
13 November 2014



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

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