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PRESS RELEASE  
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## **SHOCKING NEW CENSUS DATA SHOWS MOST OLDER RENTERS IN SEVERE POVERTY - HAAG WELCOMES THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE**

Shocking new data from the ABS Census shows that 84% of single older\* private renters in the Greater Melbourne region are in housing stress, and the majority (54%) are in severe stress paying more than half their income in rent, forcing many older people into abject poverty and ill health. Current trends suggest this situation is only going to get worse with an ageing population and more people expected to be retiring in rental housing in the future rather than home ownership.

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG), a local housing support agency for over 55's is funded by the Victorian Government to assist this group of people and has been successful in housing over 600 older people at risk of homelessness in the past 5 years. Public Housing directly addresses the unique needs of this age group by providing capped rent, all-ability design or modifications, and a permanent tenancy.

On the positive side, HAAG congratulate the Victorian Government for its landmark decision to prioritise the needs of applicants when they turn 55 years of age. This is one step that will help many of these people, but more still needs to be done.

HAAG has been campaigning for this change for many years and is delighted that the Government has listened to older people. This decision shows that the Victorian Government understands the vital role that housing provides for the health and wellbeing of people as they age. This is also significant for the whole Victorian community as it ensures that older people do not fall into crisis, needing expensive emergency health interventions and even premature entry into nursing home care.

Don Wollard (58) tried to sustain himself in private rental for a while, and even jumped around hotel rooms selling his belongings to pay the room charges. As Don's health deteriorated he found himself homeless. HAAG assisted Don to make an application for Public Housing under the priority Segment One. After 10 months Don was found a home that gave him security and enabled him to take charge of his health.

*"I can't really believe I am here...I couldn't have imagined my life would spiral out of control to the point where I was homeless, and now, I cant believe I finally have stability again." says Don. 'It gives me peace of mind knowing that I have a place I can afford and a home that supports me, particularly when I am unwell."*

HAAG's National Project worker, Jeff Fiedler says, *"There's nothing remotely like this in the rest of Australia, for example in NSW priority is for over 80's!"* But he cautions, *'There are still thousands of older, battling renters who haven't even applied or who have just a bit too much in the bank to be eligible for priority. We still need more public housing and more services available to assist these people to navigate a complex system."*

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

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*\*ABS Census 2016, relates to single private renters over 65. Single households represent 75% of all private renters over 65.*

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