

There is real momentum for change to address older person's homelessness across the country. This election has demonstrated that our voices are powerful. People speaking out and asking decision makers for action can shift government policy to improve housing outcomes for older people as a priority.

We encourage you to contact your local federal Member of Parliament to request a meeting to talk about the issue of older person's homelessness and what needs to change. Local members are interested in local concerns and with the right information, encouragement and clear recommendations, you can be a champion for older people and their housing issues.

We want to hold the new government to account to ensure the housing needs of older people at risk of or and experiencing homelessness are addressed via the design and implementation of appropriate policies.

*“Email, write, phone, visit, tell your story, talk to MPs, be prepared to vote on it.”* (The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP; At Risk 2021, HAAG online event)

## Here are some tips for meeting with your federal representative

### 1. Find your local federal representative

You can find your electorate here: <https://electorate.aec.gov.au/>

Candidate details may have not yet been updated on the Parliament of Australia website:

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members/Members](https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members) It is worth checking the results here:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/elections/federal/2022/results?filter=all&sort=az&state=all>

Once you have identified the representative, you will then need to search for their contact details, preferably an email address.

### 2. Do your research

Before you contact your local representative, find out some information about them. Check their website, social media and media releases to see what motivates and interests them, whether they are in government, opposition or an independent. Do they have ministerial responsibilities or a particular interest? Do you have any common ground or interests? The more you know about your federal representative the easier and more free-flowing the conversation will be.

### 3. Requesting and setting up the meeting

We have a **template letter** that you can use to request a meeting. This can be found on our website.

About a week after sending the request, give the electorate office a call. Federal representatives receive a huge amount of correspondence, so calling to follow up can be effective. You will probably speak to a staff member rather than the representative themselves. They will be able to help you to arrange the meeting. You may also have to call a few times if they are busy.

### 4. Be clear, prepared and briefed before you call

When you call your local federal representative's office, introduce yourself and explain where you are calling from. Make it clear that you live in their electorate. Clearly explain the reason for your call, and that you would like to have a meeting with the representative to explain your concerns about older people's homelessness. Have the date and other information about your meeting request (letter or email) handy so the staff members can track it down in their correspondence records. Consider your availability and preference for the meeting location before you call. It could be in person at their office, a community hub/local service or online. You may wish to take along an advocate, friend or a family member. Let the person know about your preferences.

Give the staff member enough information to convince them that they should arrange a meeting for you. Offer to send through more information by email if that would help. Staff members deal with a lot of calls on a variety of issues. They will appreciate clarity and brevity. During the call, ask for the best email address and phone number to contact the staff member if needed.

### 5. Once you have arranged the meeting

Following the call, be sure to email or write to the office to confirm the meeting details.

### 6. Meeting the representative/candidate

See below for more information about how to prepare for the meeting.

### 7. Follow up promptly

Make sure you follow up after the meeting by thanking the representative or candidate and their staff via email. Share relevant information (links to reports are available on the HAAG website). Maintain your relationship with the representative by keeping in touch about important new developments or issues.

*“Tell your politicians you'll change your vote if they don't change their policies. Share your story, it is powerful”.*

(Senator Larissa Waters: At Risk 2021 event)

## The meeting

You will probably have no more than 30 minutes for your meeting with the federal representative. Introduce yourself (any others accompanying you) and use your time wisely. Get to the point. Be specific and clear about the issue and what you want them to do. Try to cover these two main areas in your meeting:

### 1. How does the issue affect the representative or candidate's electorate

If you are comfortable with doing so, share your story or consider asking another member of the community or a community advocate to the meeting to tell their story. Explain what you know about older people's risk and experiences of homelessness in the community. Personal stories make the issue relatable and harder for the representative to deny or downplay the importance of. Older people's experiences of housing stress and homelessness are the result of systemic and structural failures but the representative or the candidate may not know how it affects their constituents.

## 2. What are you asking them to do?

Consider the key policies you would like to see. For example, if your main concern is about lack of affordable housing for older people, ask them to commit to more ambitious targets for social and affordable housing. HAAG is asking the federal government to take very specific measures.

- You can align your “asks” to HAAG’s policy recommendations (see below).
- You can ask that them to consult with older people at risk of and experiencing homelessness about their housing needs.

## HAAG’s policy recommendations

The full list of HAAG’s policy recommendations are available to download here, including updated asks of the new government in response to the Australia Labor Party’s (ALP) election commitments. Feel free to print this document and leave a copy with your local representative. Broadly, HAAG is asking the government for:

- More housing
- More Support
- Less inequality

One important element in achieving this ensuring that there is genuine consultation and engagement of people with lived experience of housing stress and homelessness in the design, development and implementation of the National Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

## Helpful Resources

- [HAAG At Risk 2021: Older women facing homelessness in Australia, from awareness to action, outcome summary](#)
- AHRC, 2019, Older Women’s Risk of Homelessness: Background Paper <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/age-discrimination/publications/older-womens-risk-homelessness-background-paper-2019>
- Mission Australia, 2017, Ageing and homelessness: solutions to a growing problem, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/position-statements/ageing-and-homelessness-solutions-to-a-growing-problem>