

There is real momentum for change to address homelessness and housing issues of older people in Victoria. Our voices are powerful. People speaking out and asking decision makers for action can shift policy to improve housing outcomes for older people in the State.

We encourage you to contact your local State representative and other local candidates to request meetings to talk about homelessness and housing issues of older people. Local members are open to meeting their constituents, especially when there is an upcoming election. They 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.

“I had a positive meeting with my local MP. She was interested in planning and housing, approachable, well briefed and very supportive”

Maeve Browne-Cooper, HAAG member

Here are some tips for meeting with your federal representative

1. Find your local State representative and other local candidates

Helpful information on a range of election related topics: icanvote.org.au/meet-the-candidates/

You can find your electorate here: parliament.vic.gov.au/findelectorate/

You can find local state representative here: bit.ly/3RQ5VWN

Contact details of the current state members are available here: bit.ly/3d3HDd5

Information about other candidates will be available on their respective party/personal websites. Some key websites include:

- Victorian Labor party: bit.ly/3BroafD
- Victorian Liberal party: vic.liberal.org.au/our-team/state/
- Victorian Greens: greens.org.au/vic/candidates/state

Once you have identified the representative or candidate, you will then need to search for their contact details, preferably an email address. Contact details are usually available on the above websites.

“I found my MP willing to listen, very aware of the issues and keen to talk about social housing”

Kris Spark, HAAG member

2. Do your research

Before you contact your local representative and candidates, 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 the representative or candidate, 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. Find the letter on our website at

oldertenants.org.au/candidate-letter

About a week after sending the request, give the electorate office a call. These representatives and candidates 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 / candidate themselves. They will be able to help you 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 representative or candidate’s electorate 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 or candidate to explain your concerns. Have the date and other information about the 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. The meeting could be in person at their electoral office, a community hub/local service or online.

You may wish to take along an advocate, friend or a family member. 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. Election times are particularly busy, and staff member 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.

Take a photo (if you're comfortable) for social media platforms with the representative or candidate.

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/candidate by keeping in touch about important new developments or issues.

"Homelessness is a 'solvable problem'. We know what needs to be done, we just need the will to carry it out."

Fiona Patten MP

The meeting

You will probably have 30 minutes to an hour at the most for your meeting with the representative or candidate. 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 investing in social and affordable housing. HAAG is asking the State government to take very specific measures.

- You can align your “asks” to HAAG’s policy recommendations (see below).
- You can ask that them to take housing policy commitments to the State election with a clear focus on older people.
- You can also ask the representative or candidate to make a public statement about the need for policies that address older people’s homelessness.

HAAG’s policy recommendations

The full list of HAAG’s policy recommendations are available at oldertenants.org.au/vicvotes-policy. Feel free to print this document and leave a copy with the representative or candidate. Broadly, HAAG is asking the decision makers to:

- Build 60,000 public and community homes in well-connected locations by 2030.
- Put tenants in the centre of policy making.
- Earmark 20% affordable housing for older people who are unable to get on the social housing waiting list.
- Improve protections for retirement housing residents.
- Establish a Housing Ombudsman with specific expertise in retirement housing and social housing.
- Expand Home at Last service to ensure the service is available to all older people in Victoria.

Helpful Resources

- [HAAG At Risk 2021: Older women facing homelessness in Australia, from awareness to action, outcome summary](#)
- [Submission to The Victorian Social Housing Regulation Review: Role of Regulation in sector accountability, viability and growth](#)
- [Submission to The Victorian Social Housing Regulation Review: Service Delivery and the Tenant Experience](#)
- [Submission to Victorian Social Housing Regulation Review: Interim Report](#)
- [Submission to: Establishing a 10-Year Strategy for Social and Affordable Housing Discussion Paper](#)