



# HOME AND HOUSED

Data and Stories from  
Housing for the Aged  
Action Group,  
Edition 3, 2019



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.



- Outreach - Assistance with Care & Housing
- Intake - Housing Information Referral
- Retirement Housing Advice & Support
- Aged Care Navigator Trial
- Ageing on the Edge National Action Project

Fighting for Housing Justice for older people since 1983

HAAG offers FREE confidential advice, housing and support older people in housing stress

*Home & Housed is our annual publication looking back at the people we've housed, the data we've collected and the things we've learned*

July 2018—June 2019

**1041**

People at risk of homelessness supported

**150**

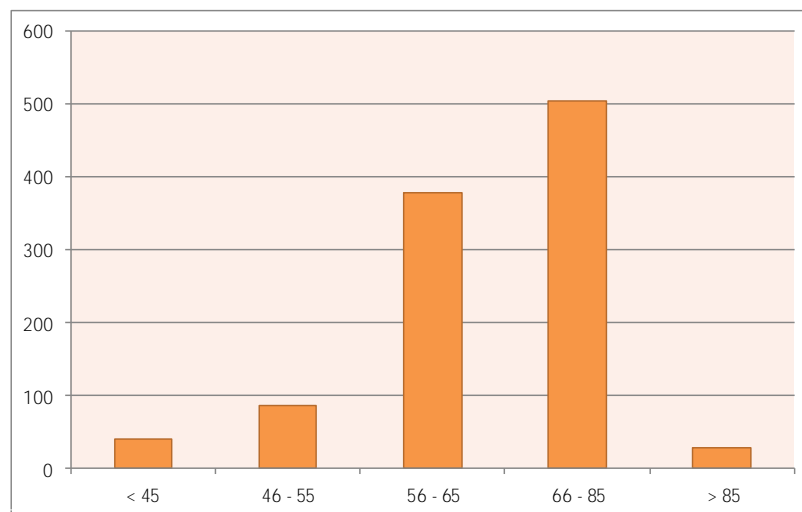
People Housed

Housing for the Aged Action Group is the only Australian organisation of its type specialising in the housing needs of older people. HAAG are committed to finding long-term solutions to the housing crisis facing older Australians.

Home at Last - HAAG's client service program - provides practical support to those seeking an appropriate, affordable home.

The services of Home at Last and Housing for the Aged Action Group are funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments.

### Age of people seeking support



\*Names asterixed in this report have been changed for peoples privacy

Age: 62

Language: Turkish

Housing before: Couchsurfing

Housing after: Public housing

**Fatma\*** contacted HAL in November 2018 as an urgent client after hearing about Home At Last from friends. She experienced homelessness over several years after she was forced to leave her home, she then moved around between friends couch surfing for a few years. She received a property offer soon after working with Home at Last after her housing application was updated to Homeless with Support. Fatma moved in quickly over the Christmas/New Year break with the support of staff. She said she is very grateful to finally have a place to call her own and she was very happy to have a roof over her head to begin the New Year.

**FATMA'S  
HAPPY  
NEW YEAR**



Language: Spanish

Housing before: Couchsurfing

Housing after: Public Housing

**Elsa and Jacinto** had been living in private rental and received a notice to vacate. They were forced into living in short-term accommodation with family and friends. Jacinto had terminal cancer and began receiving palliative care while couch surfing. They did not consider public housing an option, because they thought there was at least a 10 year wait time.

Home at Last made a priority housing application and they were housed in December 2018 and were assisted to move by Home at Last. Since then their quality of life has positively changed and their mental health has clearly improved.

**ELSA  
and  
JACINTO**



People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds face additional barriers accessing services – as well as language barriers, there may be a lack of knowledge of what services are available and a lack of trust in those services. Some communities have a higher proportion of older renters, and may be living in unhappy situations with family due to a lack of options and not knowing where to go for help.

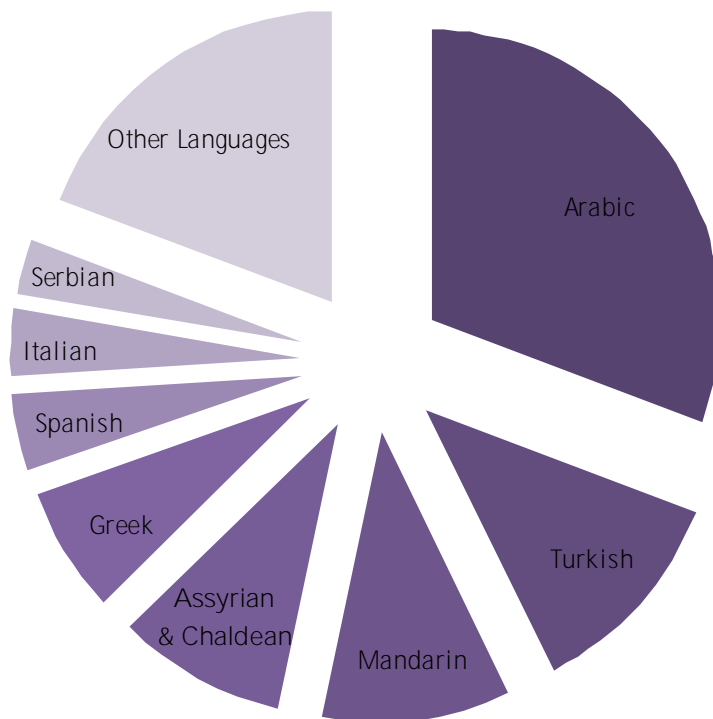
For a number of years we have worked with communities to address these barriers. Rather than just translating documents, we use bilingual

educators and community leaders to reach older people in housing difficulty. Our service is informed by a cultural diversity advisory group, and many of these members also deliver community education in their first language. Around 50% of our housing support staff are bilingual, speaking six languages other than English, as well as using interpreters daily.

More information on our CALD projects and translated resources are available at [oldertenants.org.au/multicultural](http://oldertenants.org.au/multicultural)

**62%**  
Clients from CALD  
Backgrounds

**29%**  
Require an  
interpreter



Languages  
other than  
English  
spoken at  
home



# ROSA'S NEW HOME

Age: 67  
Language: Macedonian  
Housing before: Family  
Housing after: Public Housing  
Time to be rehoused: 14  
months

**Rosa\*** became homeless after her husband passed away. She was living in the house her husband had bought, but when he died, her daughter sold the house to service her own mortgage. She was left with nothing, and had to move in with this daughter. After two months she started to experience family violence and moved in with another daughter.

The property was very small and already overcrowded (2 bedroom house for a couple with three children, Rosa and a dog). Rosa always felt that this situation was not going to be sustainable in the long-term. Her only income was the Age Pension and she did not have any assets. Rosa sometimes had to couch surf at her friends' houses to avoid conflicts at her daughter's place. She was under a lot of pressure to move out. Emergency accommodation could only provide her with a rooming house, which was not a suitable option for her given her mental state.

Rosa contacted Home at Last at the end of April 2018 and a Priority Access housing application was completed and approved in May 2018. She was also linked to Seniors Rights Victoria to address the elder abuse. In June 2019, Rosa received a property offer and she was finally housed in a public housing property at the end of the month.

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58.2% of our clients are women, many of whom find themselves homeless, following a life event, such as the death of a partner, illness, loss of employment. They may find themselves couchsurfing with friends or living with family in overcrowded conditions, and may be under pressure to leave. Compounding this issue is elder abuse and family violence, which may include emotional abuse or financial abuse, such as selling assets of an older person without permission. Family violence services may not be well equipped to cope with the needs of older women, and emergency housing options are not suitable for older people.

These stressful conditions have a great impact on the health and well-being of older women.

# JOHN AND MAX



Age: 62

Housing before: Private rental

Housing after: Public Housing

Time to be re-housed 3 months

John\* had lived in a run down private rental apartment for 14 years. His requests to have the leaking roof fixed was ignored and he was told to use another room in the house every time it rained. The flat had mould and peeling plaster. After 13 years he was issued

with an eviction notice, as the apartment was to be demolished.

John was fearful of becoming homeless as he had bad experiences of emergency accommodation in the past. He also had a little pet dog Max who had provided him with companionship for 10 years.

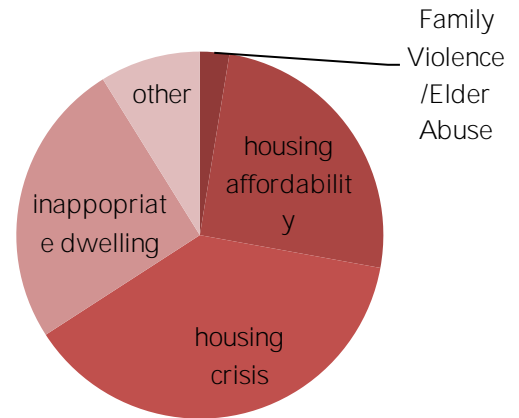
John visited Home at Last in November 2018 and an outreach worker assisted him with a priority housing application. He was approved and received an offer of public housing, moving in May 2019. Home at Last assisted him with a new bed, fridge and household items for a fresh start.

*‘I’m starting to feel better about myself, getting into a routine and settling into my new home’.*

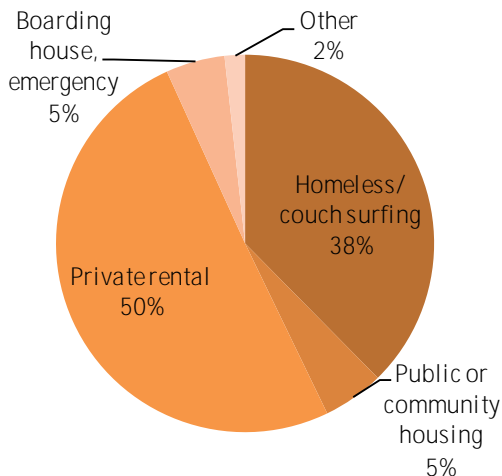
25% of people come to our service primarily because they are living in inappropriate, poor quality housing. The cheaper end of the private rental market is often in bad condition, and landlords may be reluctant to make repairs, especially if they have plans to demolish the housing, as in John's case. Minimum standards in rental properties are important for older people, however, even good quality rental housing may still be insecure as people may be evicted from their housing. 38% of our clients present to our service due to a housing crisis, such as receiving a notice to vacate.

This story also illustrates the importance of housing that allows pets. Recent changes to the Residential Tenancies Act means that tenants cannot be "unreasonably refused" requests to have pets in private and public rental.

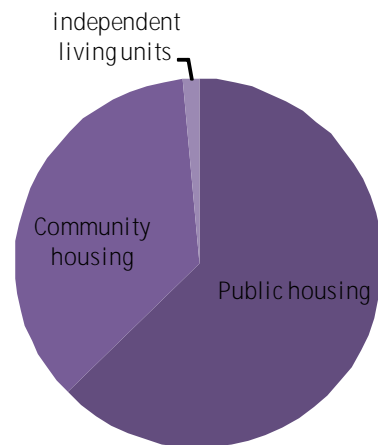
## Main reason for seeking support



## Housing before support



## Housing after support





Age: 80s

Housing before: Private rental

Housing after: Public Housing

Time to be re-housed 3 months

Jimmy had lived in a rundown caravan park for 30 years in a freezing/boiling caravan, traipsing to the communal toilet every night, until finally being forced out when the park was being 'upgraded' to 'boutique living'. While HAAG's Retirement Housing team was working with residents to make sure their rights were

respected, Home at Last was working with him to find more appropriate long-term housing.

## JIMMY'S CARAVAN

After putting in a priority housing application, Jimmy was housed in public housing, which Jimmy describes as "luxury". He is thrilled that he is close to public transport to get to his daily gym classes. The unit has garden beds which he is looking forward to planting out as a keen gardener. He lost interest in gardening when things got bad in his park but he now says he has a new lease on life.



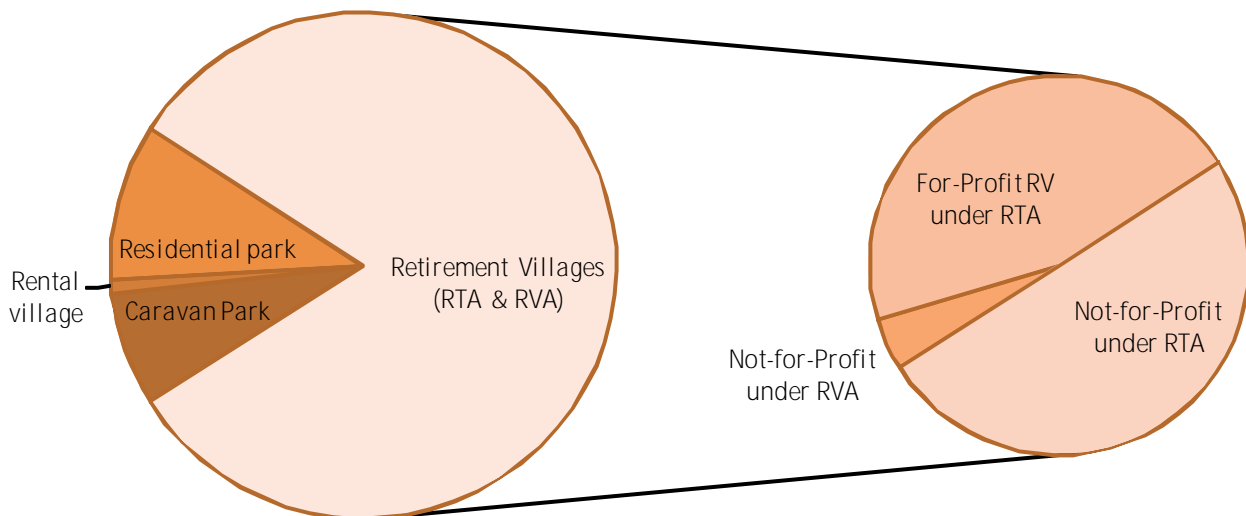
Jimmy's story is a great example of how the "one-stop shop" model of housing support works well for older people. With our housing support team working closely with our in-house retirement housing team, the service was able to support residents like Jimmy find appropriate housing, after a caravan park closure.

Rather than being referred out, our wrap-around was able to work quickly and in coordination with other local services to address all the issues surrounding caravan park closures.

Our retirement housing team works with people in different types of retirement housing. These housing types are known as different things and may fall under the jurisdiction of either the

Residential Tenancies Act or the Retirement Villages Act. The graph below shows that the majority of our clients are living in retirement villages, most of which fall under the Residential Tenancies Act (Part 4 or Part 4A). A small number of our clients live in retirement villages under the Retirement Villages Act, and are living in villages run by not-for-profit organisations. Due to HAAG's focus on financial disadvantage and low income older people, we do not have many clients living in for-profit retirement villages, which tend to have a higher cost to enter. There is widespread confusion about terminology and legislation covering retirement housing, which is why there is a need for a specialist service such as ours.

## Our Retirement Housing Service assists people in...



# AGED-CARE NAVIGATORS TRIAL



As part of HAAG's One Stop Shop model, HAAG is now providing assistance to people who want information about Aged Care Services, as well as help to register for My Aged Care.

Many people who have been homeless or at risk of homelessness are forced to put their health and wellbeing last, due the ongoing stress of their housing situation. Many people also believe they are unable to receive assistance in their home, when their home is temporary, unstable or

overcrowded.

The trial is being delivered as part of a consortium led by COTA Australia and funded by the Australian Government. It aims to support people to access aged care services, including registering for My Aged Care and receiving information about services that are available in the home such as cleaning, meals, disability modifications, physiotherapy, personal care and so on.

There are three elements to our service:

- Home visits by bi-lingual volunteers
- A drop-in service at our HAAG office, available to any older person, not just those experiencing housing issues
- Information sessions for community groups about how to access My Aged Care and the services that are available

For more information about the Aged Care Navigator Trial, or to make an appointment to speak with one of our volunteers, visit [oldertenants.org.au/aged-care](http://oldertenants.org.au/aged-care)

www.older tenants.org.au 1300 765 178 haag@older tenants.org.au

Level 1, Ross House 247-251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000



HAAG is a growing team made up of a Committee of Management, staff, members, volunteers, clients and supporters. Back page photo by Guruswamy Perumal with contents and photos from staff and clients



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HAAG offers FREE confidential advice, housing and support to over-55's