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**MEDIA RELEASE:**

**Residents of ‘forgotten’ retirement villages finding their voice**

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) is launching a project today which, for the first time, hears from the “forgotten” residents of not-for-profit retirement villages in Victoria.

According to researcher Aoife Cooke, there is a lack of awareness around retirement villages run on a not-for-profit basis. Usually named ‘Independent Living Units,’ or ‘ILUs’ these small groups of houses for older people are dotted around Victoria and have generally been overlooked by government and policy makers in recent decades.

“Independent Living Units are a significant option for older people looking for a home in retirement, but they remain off the public radar potentially leaving people at risk. Now residents are having their voices heard.”

The report ‘Independent Voices’ tells us what is going on in not-for-profit retirement villages, both good and bad, through the eyes of the people who live there.

“We spoke to residents who are satisfied with their living situation in ILUs’, explains Cooke, ‘with fair treatment, a community atmosphere, good location. Fundamentally, housing related stress is reduced when older people are being treated with dignity and respect in their homes, and this needs a strong regulatory backbone.”

However, not all stories were positive. Low-income tenants in particular told of exploitation and mistreatment. HAAG chairperson Daisy Ellery says ‘We wanted to find out from residents what it’s like to live in an ILU and whether older people feel safe, secure, and fairly treated. Unfortunately we have learned of unfair fees and charges; inaccessible routes for dispute resolution; a lack of legal protections for residents and significant instances of mismanagement.’

The release of the report is timely, as it coincides with a parliamentary inquiry into retirement housing. Recommendations from this report will be submitted to the inquiry, particularly around legal issues, contracts and management culture.

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**Further information:**

[www.oldertenants.org.au/independent-living-units-ilus](http://www.oldertenants.org.au/independent-living-units-ilus)

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/ombudsman-for-retirees-greens-push-20160220-gmz4ph.html>