Wednesday, November 2, 2022

Dear Candidate,

PLEASE TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS OLDER PEOPLE’S HOMELESSNESS

I am a resident of your electorate. As a constituent and a voter, I am writing to bring your attention to an issue that is of concern for many people in our local community.

With a decline in home ownership at retirement age, unprecedented increases in housing prices, high rents, and a decline in public, community and affordable housing stock in Victoria, older people are experiencing significant housing challenges and are at increased risk of homelessness. Older women are the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness in Australia. This is an issue that is affecting older people across the state, including older people in your electorate.

According to the 2021 Census, there are 170000 people aged 55 years and older living in private rental in Victoria. Older renters are at increased risk of homelessness due to high rents, risk of eviction and low quality housing that does not allow them to age in place. Affordable retirement housing options are few and far between, and many residents of retirement housing report issues with dispute resolution, poor management and unfair fees.

If you and your colleagues take action now, we can improve the lives of many older people to allow them to age safely and with dignity. I support the recommendations of Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) and reiterate that the Victorian Government must:

1. Build public, community and affordable housing for older people in areas that allow maintenance of social and cultural networks, access to transport, health and other services, and green spaces.
2. Improve protections for retirement housing residents, to make retirement housing a fairer and more affordable housing option
3. Establish a housing ombudsman, with specific expertise in retirement housing and social housing, that provides free, fast, accessible and binding dispute resolution
4. Expand the successful Home at Last program across Victoria as part of an early intervention and prevention approach.

More information about these recommendations is available on the HAAG website <https://www.oldertenants.org.au/>.

I look forward to hearing from you on this important community issue.