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**NEW REPORT REVEALS HIDDEN FACE OF OLDER HOMELESSNESS:
Key findings released for Homelessness Week**

Housing for the Aged Action Group has just completed a landmark report on the first two years of its Home at Last service, showing an astonishing picture of struggle and poverty for thousands of older people who sought help to avoid homelessness.

Fiona York, co-manager from HAAG said today “This is the hidden picture behind the more visible street homelessness that has recently made headlines in Melbourne. Many older people, often women, have lived conventional lives but reach retirement with no housing security. Living on the age pension, a rent rise or eviction can be the tipping point that causes a downward spiral into couch surfing, sleeping in cars and on the streets” she said.

To draw attention to this hidden problem, a group of older people who have recently experienced a housing crisis are braving the rain to demonstrate in Federation Square today.

‘At the crossroads in retirement’ documents a rapid trend with the following findings:

- 52% of Home at Last clients were in trouble in the private rental market, often due to impending evictions or rent increases
- 26% had already been evicted and living ‘temporarily’ with family or friends
- 90% are paying more than 30% of their income in rent and 38% are paying more than 60% of their income.
- 60% of Home at Last clients are women who have had lower lifetime wages, periods out of the workforce raising families, lower savings and superannuation.
- The majority are over 65 years of age and homelessness can cause a serious spiral in health and wellbeing.
- 44% are from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, with recent migrants more likely to be renting and at risk of homelessness in retirement.
- Finding a service that can help is the key. 66% of Home at Last clients were housed in long-term housing within 3 months, where 98% are now paying 30% of their income or less in rent. However, there are only 2 specialist older persons’ homelessness services in Australia out of 1500 agencies.
- Declining rates of home ownership and a 44% increase in five years in the number of older people in private rental is creating an underclass of older people, the majority women, 80% who rely on the age pension as their main income.
- The average rent takes 65% of the pension and two months legal notice to leave is common.

For a copy of the report, more information and to speak to Home at Last clients about their experience contact Fiona York on 0449 554 142 or Fiona.york@oldertenants.org.au