



older tenants voice

Housing for the Aged Action Groups Quarterly Newsletter



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

FIGHTING FOR HOUSING JUSTICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1983





Hello dear members,

Thank you to the many persons who attended the General Meeting last week. It was a great day of fellowship and good ideas, plus a lot of chatter from so many people talking together on experiences of aged care - which was an indication of the high personal interest in the topic.

So many examples of ignorance or neglect towards older people were voiced and excellent options for change in care and housing. Notes from the day will prove to be exactly what the Royal Commission personnel need to hear from us all. Well done to everyone.

By now, we all have heard the sad stories about inhuman aged care in nursing homes in various cities and states. The Royal Commission has set down a list of terms and conditions for submission writing, which is available at the HAAG office for anyone wishing to read and respond to it.

An event of last week was the annual Awards Day for the volunteers in social housing in Victoria. The people at Parliament house made us welcome. The Molly Hadfield awards were presented by our very own Sue Marino daughter of Molly and a HAAG Committee of Management member. Molly was so instrumental in HAAG's beginning and admired so much at times like these when we see recipients honoured in her name. Our new state Minister, Richard Wynn declared he was really happy to again be in charge of the Housing portfolio... and we will keep reminding him he said that.

A big WELL DONE is due to the workers of HAAG too. Due to their efforts in this new year there has been lots of action and some welcome donations. You'll read more about it all further in this publication but I begin by noting the increased number of clients being housed, against all odds, in secure homes. A donation from Western Region Aged Services has assisted the buying of new beds for clients being moved and was gratefully received indeed. Streetsmart donated over \$7,000, which will be used for a three month project to aid the ongoing LGBTI planning for affordable long term housing.

We are very proud of Jeff's work with the National Homelessness Action Plan, which is taking him off and around other parts of Australia. Dr Sandra South from the Australian Association of Gerontology and her two colleagues, Dr Sue Malta and Dr Bradley Foster, are attached to HAAG to aid national action and reports to the Federal Government as required by tender. HAAG has

CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME

always been a unique Victorian operation but now the requests continue to roll in from other states to show how they may begin the same service for aged clients. Be proud folks.

Another achievement of note is the Aged Care System Navigator up and running. It is an Information Hub for all you need to know about any aspect of aged care and the volunteer coordinator is Rebecca, a whiz with the data. Leonie is another new face at HAAG as part time coordinator for Jeff's work and who produces an E-Newsletter called NASH. Great networking.

Yours truly,

Phyll Williams

MOLLY HADFIELD AWARD

Congratulations to Erika Lodge who was awarded the Molly Hadfield award for. Erika has been volunteering for 12 years working with seniors and in the homeless sector.

The award is named after the late Mary (Molly) Hadfield OAM, who was a dedicated advocate for public housing tenants. She was a founding member of Housing for the Aged Action Group, which formed in 1983.

Congratulations also to all the nominees, who are all doing invaluable work for older tenants. A very special mention to HAAG volunteer Vanessa Heart. Having lived the horrors of homelessness Vanessa is working with HAAG as a Peer Educator to campaign for more housing and improved homelessness support.



Nominees Jennifer Martin and Vanessa Heart

March



13

HAAG taking to the airwaves



Volunteer Radio Host Pam Young

Starting this March HAAG's radio show *Raising the Roof* will come to you twice as often on 3CR community Radio.

Tune in to our new timeslot on **855AM at 5:30 on the 2nd and**

4th Wednesday of the month to hear the latest in older peoples housing issues from around Melbourne and the world.

If you haven't heard the show or miss an episode, you can always tune in online at oldertenants.org.au/podcast

March



17

Bill of Rights Forum



The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church is hosting a forum on Sunday March 17 to promote a campaign for a Bill of Rights for Australia.

110 Grey Street

East Melbourne, 3002

Sunday 17 March 11.00 a.m.

This is supported by a range of community, legal and religious organisations. Speakers include Prof. Rob Watts (Professor of Social Policy RMIT), Prof. Gillian Triggs (former President of the Australian Human Rights Commission) and Julian Burnside QC. The forum will also include workshops for community participation.

April



3

Geelong Members Meeting



GEELONG HAAG MEETING

You are invited to attend a special meeting specifically for HAAG members in the Barwon Region.

1. Introduction to HAAG and our new work in the Barwon region
2. How you can help us get information into the community
3. Retirement Housing- some key issues
4. Retirement Housing- where to from here?

03/04/2019 • 11AM-12.30PM

Norlane Bowling Club, 26-36 St Georges Rd, Norlane
Morning Tea Provided

TO RSVP CALL 96547389, TO DISCUSS
SPEAK TO GEMMA OR FIONA W

July



10

Fair Go For Pensioners Conference



'UP IN THE AIR': FAIR GO FOR ALL GOING GOING...?

Australia's democratic system is in trouble more public 'welfare' services are privatized and costly, there is a lack of federal political leadership and we have lost trust in them.

Wednesday 10th July 2019 9:00 – 4:00pm
Coburg Greek Orthodox Church, Community Hall
23-29 Victoria Street, Coburg 3056

Come and discuss what's gone wrong,
what sort of 'welfare' services and society we want
and how we can get there.

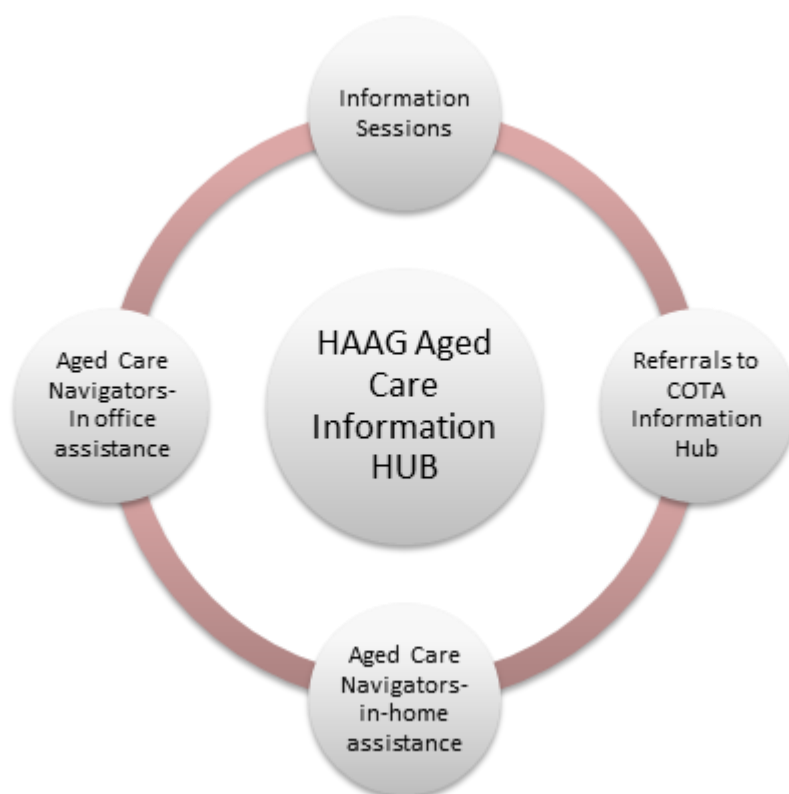


The conference is free however numbers are limited. Register now to reserve your place. If you need an interpreter please state language.

For more information about the conference, please contact us
at eventsfgfpvictoria@gmail.com or mobile: 0477 236 880.

HAAG is pleased to announce that we are joining the Aged Care Systems Navigator trial, an eighteen month national trial led by COTA Australia that will develop and test different models to support people to understand and engage with the aged care system. The project will consist of 62 trials delivered across the country to a range of different people, including vulnerable older Australians and those facing barriers accessing aged care.

HAAG is excited to be part of this trial as our knowledge and expertise gained over years of working directly with vulnerable older people make us well-placed to take on this role. As the only organisation focusing on homelessness in Victoria, we will be joining 31 organisations who are creating “information hubs” across Australia.



HAAG’s Aged Care Information Hub will provide information, advice, and support (both in English and languages other than English) to people who have difficulty engaging with the aged care system and need additional support to understand and access aged care services. Our Information Hub will provide one-on-one assistance to register for My Aged Care by bilingual and English speaking volunteers in home or at the HAAG office.

The aged care system is complex and difficult to navigate. Many older people are falling through the gaps, especially if they are living in insecure housing or speak a language other than English, or have no access to the internet. Our role in the Aged Care Systems Navigator trial will begin to bridge the gap by ensuring older Victorians who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless are able to access aged care and receive the care they need.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was announced following a damning report on Four Corners late last year. HAAG made two submissions to the Terms of Reference – a joint one with Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria, COTA Victoria and Consumer Action Law Centre and one from our national project. The final Terms of Reference did not include retirement housing in their scope, as we requested, however, the terms do give us the opportunity to talk about some of the issues with accessing aged care for people at risk of homelessness or in unsuitable housing.

HAAG will be making a submission to the Aged Care Royal Commission, and we encourage our members to make their own submission. If you or your friends or family have had an experience with trying to access aged care or with receiving aged care, then you can tell the Royal Commission about it.



On 28 February, on a very hot day, around 35 members came to our General Meeting to talk about aged care. We broke into small groups for a very lively and loud discussion where people talked about their experiences in accessing aged care, receiving aged care and their ideas for how the system can be improved. We're collating the notes from the meeting to inform our submission to the Commission.



The Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, has commissioned an action plan under the Aged Care Diversity Framework for older people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness (the Homelessness Action Plan). This is part of the work towards realising the Aged Care Diversity Framework's vision that ***“All older people experience a high-quality aged care system that ensures equitable access and outcomes and embraces their diverse characteristics and life experiences”***.

HAAG is working with a Reference Group and the Aged Care Sector Committee Diversity Sub-group to develop the Homelessness Action Plan (HAP).

The aged care Homelessness Action Plan aims to improve aged care for people who have:

- ◇ Rented a home with no guarantee of staying in that home long term
- ◇ Renting a home that is too expensive, in poor condition or not suitable for ageing
- ◇ Lived with friends or family because no other options available or suitable
- ◇ Lived somewhere that was not safe and secure, for example due to threats and violence
- ◇ Lived in housing that is meant to be temporary, like a boarding house, shelter or hostel
- ◇ Lived in a house that was overcrowded and privacy an issue
- ◇ Lived in housing that was inadequate, like a caravan
- ◇ Not had a place to stay and slept in a car or on the streets

HAAG is adopting a rigorous, transparent, fair and evidence-based approach to the development of the Homelessness Action Plan. Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders has occurred through a series of on-line surveys and individual telephone interviews. The HAP project team are currently also travelling around Australia to visit services and talk to people.

At the moment The HAP team at HAAG are in the thick of face-to-face consultations, site visits and collating feedback and findings and it is going well so far.



Wintringham CEO Bryan Lippman, Minister for Aged Care Hon. Ken Wyatt MP with HAAG's Jeff Fiedler and Dr Sandra South



Caravan Park Consultation

On 14 February, a group of residents living in residential parks and caravan parks met with two representatives from the Department of Environment Water Land and Planning (DELWP) at the HAAG offices.

The meeting was to discuss Part 14 of the Residential Tenancies Act which covers the registration of caravan parks and the standards for “unregistered moveable dwellings”. These regulations are ten years old and they are “sunsetting” in 2020. The meeting was part of the early consultation about these changes, and will help the government know what needs to be included in the Issues Paper.

Some of the issues raised included emergency management, fire safety, lighting, garbage and recycling, footpaths and accessibility. Knowing who is responsible for what, and who to go to with issues was a major concern.

When the Issues Paper is released in April there will be another opportunity for public consultation. If you are interested in talking to DEWLP or finding out more, please call the retirement housing team on 9654 7689.

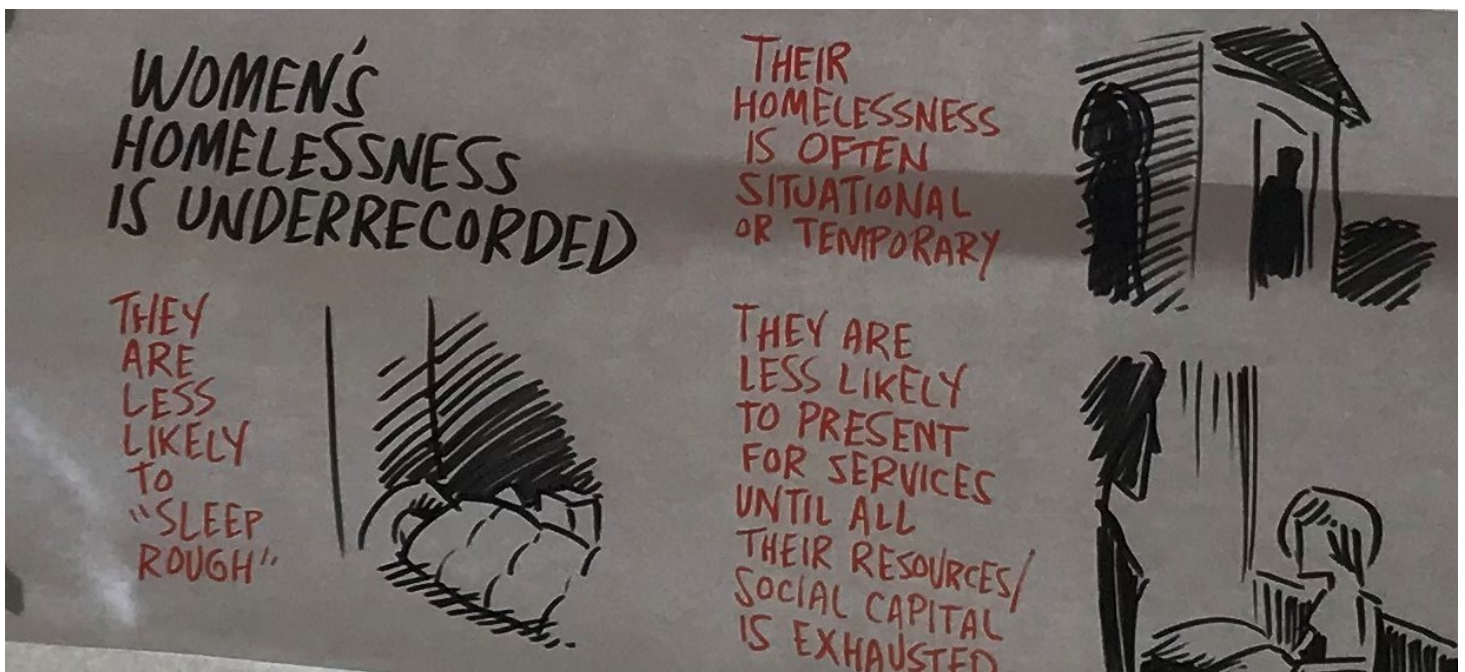
Retirement Accommodation Action Group (RAAG)

RAAG has met twice already in 2019 covering many topics that impact older Australians living in all types of retirement housing. The topics that prompted the most substantial and passionate discussions were the Royal Commission into Aged Care and the need for a Retirement Housing Ombudsman. The concerns the Aged Care Commission is bringing to light can intersect with a person’s type of housing, or the housing provider. For example, an independent living unit provider may also have in home support services available, and may block a resident’s chosen provider to enter the property to deliver services and support. The meetings have also highlighted the need to keep the Retirement Housing Ombudsman on the agenda after the 2018 state election.

RAAG is in the process of working out the details for a ‘Day of Protest’ for any older person living in any form of retirement housing type who wants to keep the points from the ‘Retirement Housing Matters’ campaign on the political agenda. The date, time and details of what to do and how you can be involved will be decided upon in the March RAAG meeting and announced soon after! If you would like to be involved please contact Fiona Waters on 9654 7689.

The Consumer Policy Research Centre has been working with us, along with a wide range of other organisations, to research the private rental market from a renter's perspective. One of the focus areas for the research was the experience of older women aged 55 and older. HAAG was on the reference group for the research and brought together a group of older women who had been living in private rental to meet with the researchers. Their experiences informed the research paper that was launched in February.

The research paper and the launch highlighted the significant rise in the number and proportion of older women in private rental. The participants in the workshop talked about low wages and the cost of housing, and how difficult it is to find new housing in areas that they know. Their largest concern in trying to find suitable housing was fear of age-based and gender-based discrimination.



"Many [renters] draw on both cash reserves and social capital to maintain tenancies, meaning by the time they present at a social service they are already homeless and don't have the resources to establish another private rental. Many draw heavily on their network of friends and **family**, joining the large number of hidden homeless who consider themselves house guests as they look for other options"

The Renters Journey: A consumer-centred approach to understanding the dynamics of Australia's private rental market pg. 31

Big thanks to Gemma White, our community education worker who is quoted in the report, and the participants in the workshop who willingly shared their experiences of the private rental market.

The report can be read online at oldertenants.org.au/renters-journey



The Ageing on the Edge NSW Forum is calling on all parties in the upcoming NSW State Election to urgently introduce three key initiatives that will make a real difference to the lives of thousands of older people suffering significant rental hardship across our State:

- Establish a **state-wide housing information and support service** for older people that help them plan for their retirement housing future and assist those at immediate risk of homelessness
- As part of a **comprehensive evidence based housing strategy** setting out a 20-year plan for NSW's housing system, develop a specific older peoples housing strategy with clear social and affordable housing supply targets accompanied by an initial five-year funded action plan.
- Support accessibility and adaptability by strengthening requirements for new homes to meet **universal design standards**

National Association of Seniors for Housing (NASH)



NASH (formerly NOPHN) is a diverse group of people from across Australia with lived experience of housing insecurity and housing distress in their senior years. This includes those homeless and marginally homeless, renters, people with unsustainably high mortgages and those with insecure and inappropriate retirement housing.

Affordable, secure and appropriate housing is essential for optimal wellbeing and quality of life. Housing stress is being experienced by an alarmingly large and growing number of older Australians.

The aim of NASH is to disseminate the experiences of older Australians experiencing housing difficulties, and to reform housing policy and services through acting as lobbyists and advocates to politicians and the broader community.

The now have a newsletter which will cover their activities campaigning for better outcomes for older peoples housing Australia-wide.

If you'd like to receive upcoming editions of the NASH email newsletter please email

leonie.bessant@oldertenants.org.au

REBECCA WALTON



Welcome back Rebecca Walton, joining the team as Volunteer Coordinator for our new Aged Care Service Navigator Information Hub project. Rebecca completed her social work placement with us last year and we're really happy to have her back!

We are sad that our long time finance worker Ani Lorient has left the team. Ani has been a major part of the administration of change at HAAG from a small community group to our growing organisation today. We wish her all the best with her new endeavours.

ANI LORIENTE



LEONIE BESSANT



Welcome Leonie Bessant as National Alliance of Seniors for Housing Co-coordinator. Leonie completed her research with HAAG into people's experiences in Independent Living Units and we're really happy to have her back

Homelessness Action Plan Project Personnel

Welcome to our whole new project team, employed for varying periods of time up to July, 2019. They are Dr Sandra South from the Australian Association of Gerontology, Dr Sue Malta from the University of Melbourne, and Bradley Foster.



Elsa and Jacinto with HAAG housing worker Paola

At the end of 2017 Elsa and Jacinto experienced for first time the anxiety and desperation of not finding a place to live after receiving a 60 days notice to vacate. All their efforts to find a private rental property during that time were unsuccessful. They believe that their age (60+), low income, and having an incurable cancer were the reasons to not be considered as potential tenants in the private market. At that time they did not consider social housing as an option as they thought that they had to wait for more than 10 years until a public housing property could become available for them.

The loss of their tenancy forced them into temporary accommodation and unfortunately their physical and mental health started to deteriorate rapidly. Although they were very thankful with the support and short-term accommodation provided

by family and friends, they were also negatively impacted by the housing circumstances. Jacinto started receiving palliative care during the time he was couch surfing. He was also feeling depressed and hopeless due to experiencing homelessness and even though Elsa had always a positive approach towards their housing circumstances she was very uncomfortable and worried she might be bothering other people with their stay.

In January 2018, they contacted the Home at Last service to seek options for secure and affordable housing for them. Information was provided to them by the intake team and an outreach worker was allocated to assist them with the whole process to get access into social housing. A Priority Access application under the category of Homeless with support was completed and the outreach worker followed the process to ensure they were housed in a property according to their medical needs. According to Elsa they felt very lucky when they were assisted and explained by the Home at Last team that they were eligible to apply for priority housing.

Elsa and Jacinto were housed on the 13th of December 2018 and since then their quality of life has positively changed and their mental health has clearly improved.

They were really thankful for the Home at Last teams help with being housed, for all the support provided during the times of difficulty and also for the support provided by the removalists when moving in to their new property



In February 2019 the Western Region Aged Care Trust generously provided a grant for HAAG to assist with purchasing beds for clients in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne.

Last year over 17% of clients supported by the Home at Last program were located in the Western region

LGBTI COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



HAAG is working with Val's LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care and Switchboard Victoria on a project about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) elders housing.

We want to better understand the housing circumstances and aspirations of older LGBTI people to help our service be more responsive to the needs of the older LGBTI community, so we've been surveying community members to find out.

We are also looking for people who are part of the LGBTI community who are interested in being part of a reference group to guide an upcoming project which will be developing and delivering community education to the LGBTI community. You can find out more about the project and sign up to become a member at oldertenants.org.au/lgbti-elder-housing

This work was made possible with the support of Streetsmart. Throughout January donations made to Streetsmart went towards this project, and they raised over \$7000! Each month Streetsmart donate money to different projects, and this month they are raising money for *Becoming a Queen Again*, a book a women experiencing domestic violence, to assist them in securing a safe place to call home, and with their recovery and healing journey. You can donate at streetsmart.org.au

HOUSING AND AGED CARE RESEARCH



The Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust has funded us to do research with the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) and Deakin University for 18 months. We are planning to develop training for aged care workers, focusing on assessors, to look out for people who are on a fixed income like the pension and who are living in private rental. We hope to raise awareness about these risks of homelessness and increase the number of referrals to Home at Last for people before they reach crisis point. Once those people

are referred into our service, researchers from NARI and Deakin will measure the health, wellbeing and cost-effectiveness of these referrals. By measuring the effectiveness of this training and referral protocols we hope to be able to advocate for systemic change across the aged care sector nationally.

163

Female
Clients

120

Male
Clients

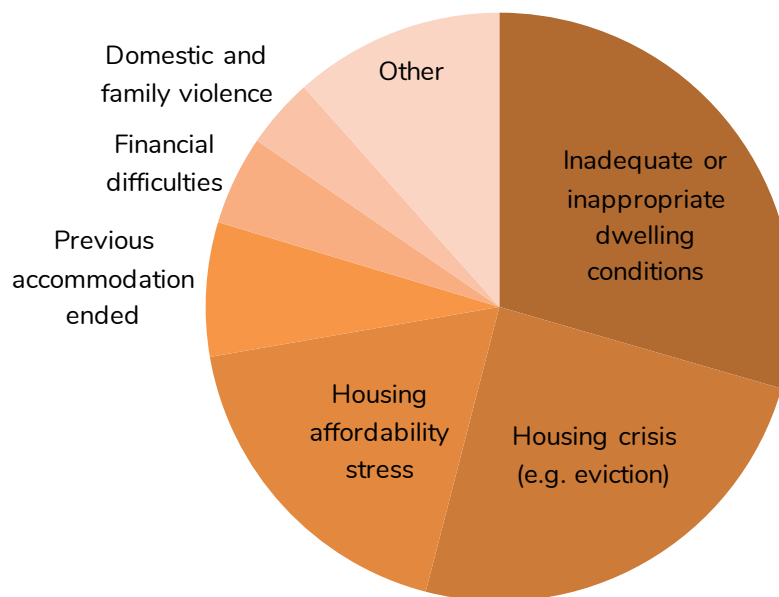
65%

from CALD
Backgrounds

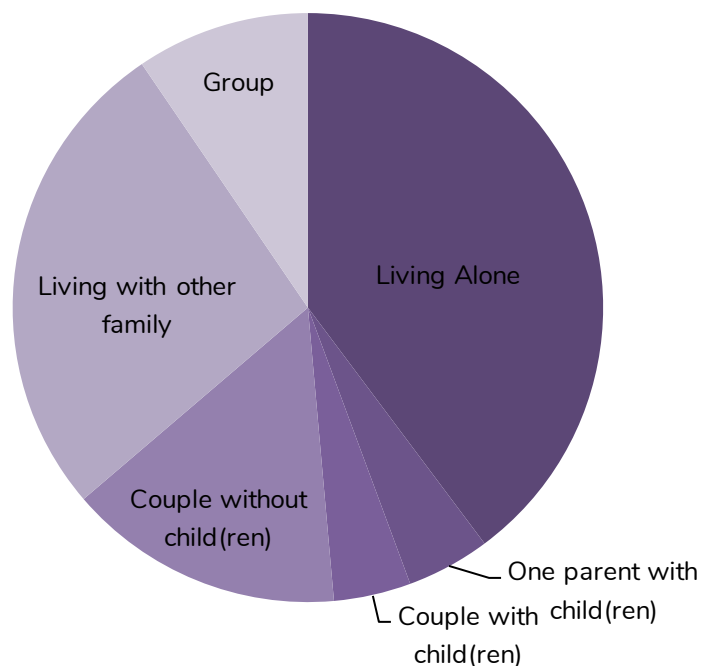
31

Clients
Housed

Main Reasons for Seeking Assistance at HAAG



People's living situations when seeking assistance



Housing for the Aged Action Group

Level 1, Ross House 247-251 Flinders Lane,

Melbourne 3000

ADMIN: 9654 7389

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100002348

SURFACE

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

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



Fighting for Housing Justice for older people since 1983

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



Fiona, Emily and Christine surveying the crowd at Midsumma Festival

- Housing Options Information
- Outreach Housing Support
- Retirement Housing Advice & Support
- Research & Policy Development