



# older tenants voice

Housing for the Aged Action Groups Quarterly Newsletter Autumn 2021



**HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP**

**FIGHTING FOR HOUSING JUSTICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1983**





Hello dear members,

The access to safe and secure housing is a fundamental human right.

Don't take my word for it. Check out Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Now too many people are living in poverty and housing stress every day. Especially, an inordinate number of older women are living a half life - at risk of homelessness. So many times such people are labelled as burdens on society, never respected as assets with life stories of note and worthy experiences of long service in their personal and public workspace spheres.

The sometimes callous disrespect to older people, women in particular, is noticeably increasing. We may be desensitised to such sad stories from so-called third world countries, but this is Australia where everything is supposedly so excellent. Instead of arranging clear solutions, the treating of older people with thoughtless, patronising or discriminatory rulings or behaviour as if they're powerless just goes on and on. Evidence of the increasingly risky life situations for many seniors has never been more prevalent, in my opinion.

So many social issues have been brought to the fore due to Covid -19, and surely must have alerted ruling bodies in governments, at all levels, that affordable housing for those at risk of homelessness is high on the list of obvious solutions to ensure care and security of older people - and definitely less costly overall than band-aid solutions.

HAAG employees are the affordable home finders for clients at risk but there are ways all of us can assist in that goal.

For example several HAAG working parties need more members - yes, we need YOU - to participate in meetings and planning. They are;

- National Alliance of Seniors for Housing - NASH for short
- LGBTI community reference group
- Retirement Accommodation Action Group - RAAG
- Cultural Diversity Reference Group

You are welcome to join with any of the working groups and if you are not used to Zoom for meetings we can teach you. It's easy, it's fun and it's worthwhile - particularly if you need help with living in any of the above nominated situations.

Also to be fair I am aware of the state government plans for building more social housing. It is tempting to say 'too little too late' but it's true nonetheless.

Sincerely, Phyll Williams

Chairperson



## General Meeting Feb 2021

Restrictions are easing, but not enough for us to be confident that we could meet face-to-face for our members General Meeting. We had a fantastic turn out of members and supporters with almost 40 people joining us on Zoom via landline phones, mobile phones, ipads and laptops.

We had updates from staff members Kobi Maglen, Rebecca Walton and Fiona York about the National Development project; the LGBTI project; and our plans to return to the office. You can read about all this elsewhere in the newsletter.

The big item for discussion was the Big Housing Build and the Ten Year Affordable Housing Strategy recently announced by the Victorian Government.

## Big Housing Build - \$5.3 billion

The following information is from a report from the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT by Dr Libby Porter and David Kelly which analysed the announcement. <https://cur.org.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/big-housing-build-report-final.pdf>

There are four main components to what the Andrews Government has dubbed the 'Big Housing Build':

## **Fast-start housing on Homes Vic (DHHS) owned land - \$532m**

- 6 sites, 5 on existing public housing estates and one open space within a public housing estate
- 446 public housing dwellings will be lost, 500 new community housing dwellings and 540 private dwellings will be built = net gain 54 dwellings (10% uplift)

## **Fast-start Purchase program - \$958m – to buy and “bring forward” private housing developments**

- Private developers put forward proposals through tender process so that Govt can buy them for social housing

## **Social Housing Growth fund - \$1.38b – for community housing organisations**

- Capital grants to community housing providers to build housing (as opposed to the old fund which was used as capital for investment in new properties)

## **Private and Community housing built on public land**

- 5200 new dwellings – unclear how much is private versus community

In addition, there was money committed to maintenance, renovations, disability access and “rapid response” for family violence, Aboriginal people and people leaving care.

- \$155m maintenance and upgrade 15000 social housing
- \$110m renovations for 2100 public housing properties
- \$50m maintenance for community housing
- \$125m rapid response for women escaping family violence, ATSI and people leaving care – unclear what type of housing these projects are for, but likely to be head leasing.
- \$30m disability accommodation upgrades

**The Centre for Urban Research report estimates that if this \$5.3 billion dollars was spent on a direct capital building grant for public housing on public land, it would deliver 20000 public housing units.** Rather than direct cash hand outs to private developers, inclusion zoning, where building public housing is mandated as part of the approval process for new buildings, would deliver the same outcome for less taxpayer dollars.

## New Departments

There are also a number of changes to Departments. DHHS is now split into the Department of Health and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), which includes women, youth, veterans, carers, elder abuse, seniors, multicultural affairs, LGBTI and family violence. They also have Housing, Disabilities, Child Protection and COVID support. There is a new entity called Homes Victoria, with a CEO (Ben Rimmer, former Housing Commissioner) and a board of experts including private developers and public servants.

## Regulation of community housing providers

A new advisory board is being established to oversee the regulations for community housing providers. There is a review into this about the commence, and we will be calling for improved tenancy selection, tenancy management and stronger enforcement of community housing providers so that it better aligns with public housing.

## Ten year affordable housing strategy

The Government has recognised that even with the Big Housing Build expenditure, it will not go far enough, and they need a long term strategy to address affordable housing. This is something we have been calling for for many years.

A discussion paper has been released and has four focus areas – pathways, community, growth and partners. They are inviting submissions by individuals and by organisations, **due April 9**. HAAG will be making an organisational submission that will focus on the “headline” issues, such as the importance of specialist support services for older people to access housing, the need for more 55+ housing, universal housing design (they have committed to energy efficiency but not accessible housing), public land should be used for public housing.

The members at our General Meeting were keen to contribute to this. So we are holding workshops with members to hear their ideas about what we should include in our submission, and also to encourage our working groups to make a “small group” submission (CALD and RAAG).

## Making submissions

You can make your own submission here: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/ten-year-social-and-affordable-housing-strategy-victoria> or you can participate in HAAGs submission by coming to the workshops on the following page.

## Consultation Workshops

March



25

### Thursday 25th March, 10:00 am

The "Missing Middle" - how can we provide affordable housing to people who have too much savings for public housing, but not enough to buy a house?

Join us via Zoom at [oldertenants.org.au/missingmiddle](https://oldertenants.org.au/missingmiddle)

Or join on the phone by calling

(03) 7018 2005 ID: 841 2005 4177 passcode: 71095

March



26

### Friday, 26th March, 10:00am

Rural and Regional Housing—How can people in these areas get the housing and services they need?

Join us via Zoom at [oldertenants.org.au/regionalmeeting](https://oldertenants.org.au/regionalmeeting)

Or join on the phone by calling

(03) 7018 2005 ID: 838 0766 4181 passcode 725338

## “Minimum Investment Guarantee” for Regions

Local Government Area	Guaranteed minimum investment
Ballarat	\$80,000,000
Bass Coast	\$25,000,000
Baw Baw	\$35,000,000
Horsham	\$15,000,000
Golden Plains	\$15,000,000
Greater Bendigo	\$85,000,000
Greater Geelong	\$180,000,000
Greater Shepparton	\$45,000,000
Latrobe	\$60,000,000
Macedon Ranges	\$30,000,000
Mildura	\$40,000,000
Mitchell	\$25,000,000

Local Government Area	Guaranteed minimum investment
Moorabool	\$20,000,000
Surf Coast	\$20,000,000
Swan Hill	\$15,000,000
Wangaratta	\$20,000,000
Warrnambool	\$25,000,000
Wodonga	\$30,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$765,000,000</b>

Members requested this information at our March General Meeting. It is the amounts of money the Government promised to spend in each region as part of the Big Housing Build. There is no information about what type of housing this will be..

March 29 is a big day for rental law changes. The emergency laws the Victorian government passed to deal with Covid will lapse – meaning rent increases, and evictions for rent arrears, will become legal again. At the same time, positive rental law changes that were postponed due to the pandemic will finally commence – meaning many Victorian renters will enjoy minimum standards in their properties for the first time.

These new laws include a whole range of positive improvements. A personal favourite is that real estate agents will no longer be able to demand bank statements that include transaction details – a pointlessly intrusive practice. Tenants will have better rights to modify their properties, ranging from putting up picture hooks to installing life-saving disability modifications to allow them to age in place.

As mentioned above, one of the biggest changes is the introduction of minimum standards for rental properties. Before this, there were *no* minimum standards; if the landlord wanted to rent you a property with no back door (as one did to a client of mine many years ago), they could. HAAG has been campaigning for this literally for decades, along with other organisations – many of our members and staff deserve credit for their role in these campaigns. The changes mean properties will need to be structurally sound and weather-proof, with bathroom and kitchen facilities and with a heater in the main living area. Over time, the standards will improve to require more energy-efficient heating devices.

There are still some big omissions. In particular, there are no requirements either for cooling or for insulation, despite a public promise from Daniel Andrews that they would require insulation. But this is a big step towards making sure every older renter lives in the decent conditions they deserve.

The changes may also mean that things no longer work quite the way you're used to, so please get in touch if you need advice about your rights.

### New Outreach Lawyer

HAAG is excited to be commencing a pilot project with Tenants Victoria, so that older people who have tenancy issues can receive specialist legal advice. An outreach lawyer will be available for appointments to discuss tenancy issues, such as evictions, repairs, discrimination, quiet enjoyment, ending a tenancy etc.

Often it's a lot easier to receive legal advice face-to-face, especially when there is paperwork involved, so we hope to be able to offer a legal clinic at HAAG when restrictions ease and if there is enough interest. At the moment, the appointments will be via phone or Zoom.

You can contact HAAG if you live in Victoria and have a tenancy issue, and we will assist you to get in contact with them. If you live in a caravan park or residential park, HAAG's retirement team will support you.

We hope this will lead to a recognition by government and funders of the importance of face-to-face and specialist advice for older tenants.



## Are you an older woman interested in sharing your story to help others? We are seeking more Peer Educators!

Following a generous grant from the Melbourne Women's Fund, HAAG is in the process of expanding our peer education program. We are looking to recruit five new Peer Educators to help with a project aimed at preventing homelessness amongst older women. We are seeking older women with a lived experience of homelessness or risk of homelessness who would be interested in sharing their experiences to help reach others in similar circumstances. Our peer education program aims to assist older women before they reach crisis point by raising awareness about what factors place older women at risk of homelessness and how they can access support.

If you have a passion for helping others and would be willing to share your lived experience publicly then we would love to hear from you! Training and support are provided as part of this volunteer role and Peer Educators will have full control over what parts of their story they share.

If you would like more details or would like to express your interest in being a Peer Educator, please contact Rebecca Cook, Participation and Early Intervention Worker by email:

[rebecca.cook@oldertenants.org.au](mailto:rebecca.cook@oldertenants.org.au) or phone: 0449 775 843



Housing for the Aged Action Group is a part of the Aged Care Service Navigator trial. The trial is testing different models in different circumstances to support people to understand and engage with the aged care system so that:

- They understand the system, including what services are available and how to access them
- They engage with and access the aged care system, including connecting with My Aged Care and receive support to access services

HAAG is an “Information Hub”, providing locally targeted information to people who face barriers to access and vulnerable people through seminars, tailored information, face-to-face support, peer support, assistance with forms and outreach.

We spoke with Jacqueline Khouri, an Aged Care Service Navigator volunteer from Housing for the Aged Action Group, about her experience as a volunteer in the project. We also discussed the ways in which Jackie supports people wanting to access aged care services.

**Can you please tell us about your role as a volunteer in the Aged Care Service Navigator project?**

I provide information and support to vulnerable people about the aged care system via one-on-one support where I talk with people about what to expect when calling My Aged Care and help people to register. I also deliver community information sessions in language (Arabic) and English which helps people to understand and get a clear picture about the aged care system.

**Why did you decide to become a volunteer?**

I heard about the role through another Aged Care Service Navigator volunteer. I decided to become a volunteer because it offers me the chance to give something back to the community, it provides an opportunity to develop new skills and build existing experience and knowledge.

**What is one thing you like about being a volunteer?**

I love talking with people and they feel comfortable and trust me when I speak in language. I also love the great feeling it brings, and I love making new friends.



Just some of the team of Aged Care Navigators

**What is the most common question you are asked as an aged care service navigator?**

People often ask me “what services are available?” I talk to people about the different services such as house cleaning, meal preparation and meals, assistance with shopping and personal care to shower and dress etc.

**What suggestions would you give someone who is wanting to access aged care services?**

Ask for support if you need help accessing My Aged Care. The Aged Care Navigator Service can provide information about aged care services and can help you access aged care supports. I also explain that they must be quite open about their needs and their physical limitations when being assessed. People are sometimes worried about being honest about the things they are finding difficult. I reassure them that these services are there to help them keep their independence.

If you or your family would like more information, please contact our Aged Care Navigator team on (03) 9654 7389.

If you attended the general meeting and would like to provide feedback about “The Aged Care Service Navigator trials – is it time to try them out?” - please go to

[oldertenants.org.au/navigator-survey](http://oldertenants.org.au/navigator-survey)



Aged Care Service Navigator Volunteer Jacqueline Khouri

We were thrilled to receive confirmation of a further four years of funding for the Ageing on the Edge Homelessness Prevention Project by the Wicking Trust. Over this next phase of the project we will work towards:

- **Establishing services in each State and Territory that provide housing information and support for low income/asset people, based on the HAAG Home at Last model**

We will work with partner organisations to design and implement services that are embedded in local systems and are responsive to local contexts. HAAG will provide backbone support to share lessons about what works, relevant policies and procedures, our community development approach, training and promotional materials.

- **Raising awareness and advocating with and for the housing needs of older people.**

We will expand the National Alliance for Senior's Housing (NASH) to build a wider network of older people with lived experience of housing stress or homelessness around Australia. We will combine the stories and experiences of NASH members with the evidence, including updated homelessness trend data and a cost-benefit analysis of Home at Last, to boost our advocacy capital. Via an advocacy strategy that prioritises two to three States and/or Territories, we will further bolster our advocacy efforts by targeting key influencers and decision-

makers.

We are currently recruiting an Advocacy Lead for this project. The aim of this role is to amplify our advocacy efforts in collaboration with Ageing on the Edge networks that have been established around the country. Given the progress of the project to date in NSW, evidenced by the establishment of the Ageing on the Edge NSW Forum and coordination group and actions, such as, Ageing on the Edge NSW Forum submissions to government, the Advocacy Lead will be located in Sydney/ NSW for an initial 12-month period. We are also recruiting a short-term Community Engagement worker to support this work at HAAG in Melbourne.

Our monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) will be guided by the development of a MEL Framework for the project. This will ensure that we are using project data and insights to inform our decision-making and we are able to provide evidence of positive outcomes for older people at risk of homelessness.



We continue to engage with people and organisations around the country. The Ageing on the Edge NSW Forum continues to grow. Recent actions include a pre-budget submission and members meeting. The Housing Older Movement via Queensland Shelter is actively engaging with the Queensland government since the recent state election about the housing needs of older women. A meeting of the Ageing on the Edge coordination group in Western Australia is planned for late March. We have been advised that we were unsuccessful in our joint tender, with a local service provider, for a pilot project under the SA government Homelessness Prevention Fund. The National Alliance for Senior's Housing (NASH) coordination group will reconvene in late March.

### Regional and Rural Pilot Project

HAAG has secured funding from the Ian Rollo Currie Estate Foundation for a pilot project in regional and rural Victoria. The purpose of this project is to pilot the delivery of the Home at Last service to support older people at risk of and experiencing homelessness in a region of Victoria. We are working in partnership with the Federation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) on this project. The project spans a 20-month period and four stages. The first stage involves sector mapping to inform the selection of a target region. On the 16th March we met to discuss and agreed to target Shepparton and the Goulbourn

Region. The next stage of the project will involve stakeholder engagement and partnership development in the target region.

This is an exciting project as it provides us with the opportunity to expand our community engagement and housing support in regional and rural Victoria, while integrating with and being complemented by HAAG's existing state-wide information and referral services. We also value the opportunity to work with new partner organisations, such as FRRR, the Ian Rollo Currie Estate Foundation and Perpetual, and learn more about how best to replicate our service via partnerships, which is our plan for other areas of the country via the Ageing on the Edge project.



HAAG was very excited to hold our first face-to-face meeting in over a year at Ross house.

We welcomed older people from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex and Transgender (LGBTI) community to share their voices and experiences around housing and homelessness. For those that were unable to attend the face to face meeting, a second meeting was held via Zoom- where we heard from LGBTI older people across Victoria- with people dialling in from regional and rural Victoria as well as Melbourne.

We talked about our report findings, the Home at Last service, and both groups talked about their own experiences of housing stress. The main message was that everyone needs to feel safe no matter where they live. Housing affordability and appropriate housing are the key issues for both people living in the city and living in rural areas, and social isolation was also a theme.

The meetings were part of a broader early intervention project and will help to inform any community education material that we are planning to develop, so that older LGBTI people are better able to navigate the housing and homelessness system and avoid a housing crisis. Thanks to everyone who came along and shared their stories.

We are now establishing an LGBTI reference group to ensure that the voices of LGBTI older people continue to be front and centre throughout both this project and further work we do at HAAG.

**Who would like to join?**

Older LGBTI people throughout Victoria who want to be heard and be active around housing issues for older LGBTI people are welcome to join.

**What's in it for you?**

We can offer a friendly environment, reimbursement for your time, as well as the opportunity to advocate for improved housing information and options for older LGBTI communities and work together towards improving the system.

**What is the commitment?**

1-2 hours once a month, a commitment to respecting privacy, and commitment to attend training if required.

**Interested:?**

contact Rebecca on [rebecca.walton@oldertenants.org.au](mailto:rebecca.walton@oldertenants.org.au)



Welcome on board Lois Knight! Lois has joined us in the short-term role of Community Engagement worker. She has an international development background as a project director and partnership manager in social development, gender and inclusion. Lois has worked in government, private and community sectors and is committed to active citizenship, local level engagement and inclusive participation. As Community Engagement worker, Lois will support the implementation of the Ageing on the Edge National Project and our other community engagement projects.



Massive congratulations to Darwin and Fang on the birth of their tiny baby!

This is a story of one of our Home at Last clients, Alma Diri. Alma, 74, first approached Home At Last about 9 years ago. Alma, following her divorce from her partner, lived with her daughter for some time. However, she had to leave her daughter's place and look for alternative accommodation to continue living independently. When I met Alma for housing assessment, she had just had a hip replacement, ambulating slowly with crutches, and was waiting for a replacement for her other hip. Alma was then sharing housing with two younger males, but due to her gender, she was expected to cook, clean and wash for everyone, even though she had to walk with crutches.

Sociology and housing literature have pointed to the positive benefits associated with older people who report having stronger ties with their families. Older people who are more socially involved with their family members are more likely to live longer than those who are isolated. For older people having strong relationships with their children and grandchildren, and other family and friends, can provide them with the valuable human interactions which we all need. Understandably, therefore Alma wanted to live in a North-Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, where she was born and always lived. She wanted to be close to her familiar surroundings, her daughters and grandchildren, and her friends. We were able to assist Alma with alternate housing, but unfortunately it was in the Western region of Melbourne, Altona. Due to lack of housing

options and reality of facing homelessness Alma accepted the property and moved to Altona.

In 2012, when Alma approached our Home At Last Program, HAL was one of the Homelessness Innovation Projects, funded by the then Department of Human Services. After three years of trial, HAAG was unsure whether ongoing funding would be secured and assist older people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Alma, along with some of our other HAL clients, assisted us in every step of our campaigning to secure ongoing Home At Last funding. Alma was in our very first Home At Last documentary film sharing her experience of homelessness. Alma attended all our forums and helped us to raise awareness about the serious risks of homelessness amongst older people especially amongst older women. Alma, on Channel 9's National TV morning program 'Today', talked about how older women are the fastest growing cohort of homeless people in Australia. She also talked how for so many women, this is an unexpected shock in their lives, one that too often tipped them to poverty. This TV moment marked the beginning of our National Project which aims to raise awareness amongst older people and implement a similar service of HAL in other states of Australia. Alma's photo of holding her house keys when she signed up for the Altona property was subsequently used in almost every HAL brochures/pamphlet and is still on our website.

Alma contacted our service 9 years later for possible housing assistance again. Alma

## ANOTHER 'HOME AT LAST'

stated that she had had 9 wonderful years in Altona and became one of the most popular tenants in the McIntyre Street social housing estate, as she was there for everyone. She made long-lasting friends and it was very difficult for her to decide to move, but she was now 74 years old and due for double knee replacement surgery. She felt she needed to be closer to her family in the northern-eastern suburbs of outer Melbourne.

Alma did not expect HAAG to provide her with any further housing assistance. She did not think she could be assisted a second time. Instead, she was calling for some housing advice, whereby I came into contact with her again. My initial needs assessment concluded that there were grounds here to apply for a housing transfer application due to her deteriorating physical health and social support care needs. Alma and I began exploring her options which included applying for an emergency transfer on the Victorian Housing Registry as well as exploring the Independent Living options in the North-Eastern region of Melbourne. With some good fortune, we were able to secure her an Independent Living Unit provided by Leith Community in North Eltham, only 3 minutes' drive from one of her daughters and a further 4 minutes' drive from her other daughter. We assisted Alma with her move just before Christmas 2020. Her Altona neighbours and friends were very sad about her moving but also happy that Alma was going home. Alma sent me a text message that said:

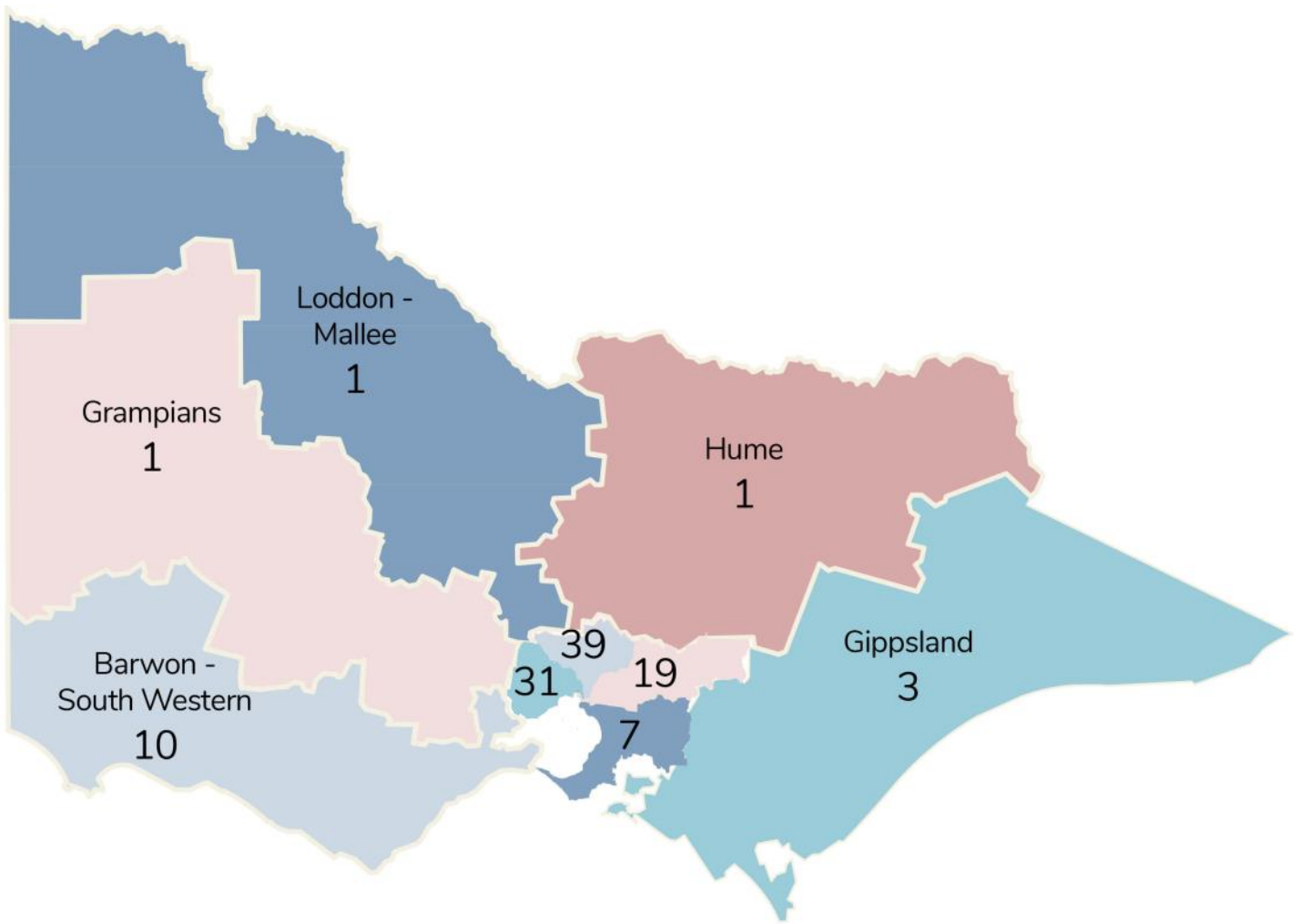
*"Hi Melis! Just wanted to thank you! I can't say it enough. My girls had so many surprises for me! They created a gorgeous garden out in my little courtyard!! The tears were flowing for some time!! Look forward to your visit in the new year! Thank you"*

Alma has settled in well and is waiting to hear from her medical specialist when she can proceed with the double knee surgery. For me, it was an absolute privilege assisting Alma one more time. Alma's tireless work along with all our HAAG volunteers and service users helped Home at Last secure ongoing funding that has enabled us to assist hundreds of other needy elderly people find appropriate and affordable housing since the project began. We can feel a sense of pride in our volunteers and the work that we together are able to undertake for them and others.





### Client Location (by Aged Care Planning Region)



Our Home at Last service works with people from across the state. However a huge majority of our clients are from the Melbourne Metropolitan region. This has begun to change with the opening of our outreach office in Warrnambool, servicing the Barwon - South Western Region.

With our new regional pilot project in Central Victoria, which falls into the Goulbourn region of Victoria, and the Federal Region of Hume, we are trying to increase our outreach into the Regional and Rural areas of Victoria.

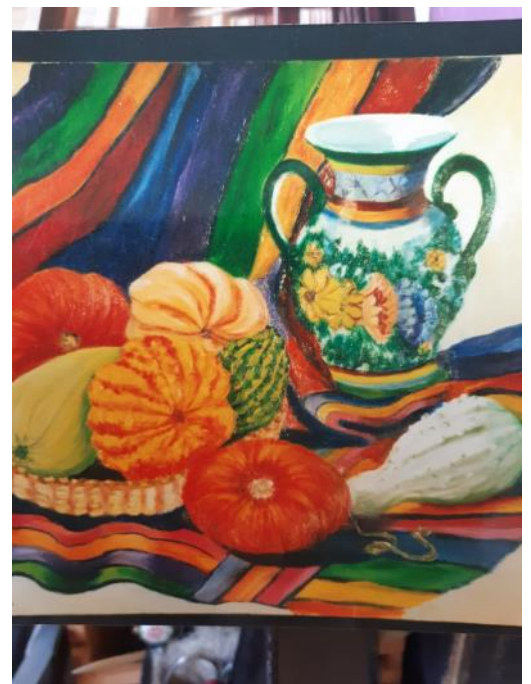
HAAG is desperate for photo content since Guruswamy Perumal, our member professional photographer extraordinaire hasn't been around especially during COVID outbreaks. So we are asking staff and members to help out by sending in their favourite photos.

This autumn we are featuring photos of people's autumn harvests. On the front cover we have featured our member and public housing resident Vanessa's impressive home grown vegetable selection..

We'd love to feature more members photos. For the next winter newsletter, the theme will be things that make you feel you warm in winter. We are also introducing a new "Letters to the Editor" column. Please send letters or photos to [oldertenants.org.au](http://oldertenants.org.au)



Finance worker Libby Heath's crop of sweet corn



Chairperson Phyll Williams' still life with pumpkins.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear HAAG, Just wanted to write to thank you for the effort and time spent in producing the report "Public and Community Housing", that I just found on your website.

Being a poor New South Welshman, there is little support such as HAAG provides, so reports like that one are quite valuable, particularly when forced to advocate for myself.

David, NSW

Dear Shane, I was terribly disappointed to read your scathing review of the Pixar movie 'UP' in the summer edition of Older Tenants Voice.

I enjoyed watching this movie with my grandchildren during their Christmas break. It is nice to see friendly older characters portrayed in movies made 'for kids'.

Since you dislike this movie so much, may I recommend another Christmastime movie - *The Grinch*? I do enjoy your reviews though, keep them coming. Roger, Dandenong.


This must be the first horror movie reviewed in the HAAG newsletter, and I wonder how many of our readers even watch horror movies? I've never been a big horror fan, but started to watch a lot of scary movies last year; as the pandemic unfolded and lockdown seemed to stretch on indefinitely, mere supernatural terror felt like a welcome relief from the real fear all around me. Most of those movies, unsurprisingly, were not about older people's housing.

*Relic* is an Australian movie with a brilliant premise. Kay (Emily Mortimer) and Sam (Bella Heathcote), a mother and her young adult daughter, arrive at the creepy old house belonging to Kay's mother, Edna (Robyn Nevin). Edna is missing, but before she disappeared she told Kay about strange phenomena in the house – objects missing or mysteriously moved, doors that she'd closed suddenly open, etc. Of course, these are both classic

signs of a haunted house and possible symptoms of memory loss and the onset of dementia. Soon Edna reappears, but can't or won't explain where she's been. Is there really something haunting the family, or is the horror just ("just"! ) that Edna can't live independently anymore?

Horror movies are at their best when they play on real fears. *The Exorcist* isn't scary because we fear demonic possession, but because of its harrowing portrayal of a sick child and a mother unable to help her; *The Shining* is terrifying not because it's about a haunted hotel but because a violent man preying on his wife and child is absolutely real. *The Relic* hits a similar sweet spot, poking at commonly held fears around ageing along with its moody photography and creepy set design.

The plot unfolds slowly and patiently, even as the house feels increasingly claustrophobic. As Kay and Sam argue about what's best for Edna, the movie pushes us to consider the complexities and stresses – really, the horror – of their well-meaning decisions. As viewers, we understand why Kay thinks residential aged care may be necessary, but we're also haunted by the possibility she's wrong – not just in the ways we always worry such decisions could be wrong, but because Edna may well be the fully competent victim of ghosts and the supernatural.

All of this makes for a tense and scary viewing experience that keeps us guessing about what is really going on right to the end. If this description hasn't completely put you off, I really recommend checking out *Relic*. - Shane Mcgrath 



## Housing for the Aged Action Group

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Fighting for Housing Justice for older people since 1983

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



Melis's home grown Autumn pumpkins. Cover photo Vanessas summer vegetables.

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