



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,

We are approaching another end of year and celebrations. I relate to you an edited version of the speech I gave to the triennial conference of the National Council of Women Australia (NCWA) in Canberra in October. We at HAAG go on repeating the message that people are at risk of homelessness in this wonderful free country and that is outrageous and it has to change... and soon. That's what HAAG people strive to do.

I wish you the very best of relaxation and cheer at this time of year and hope you will be aware of any person you meet who needs some help,

Your's truly, Phyll Williams

On a bitterly cold Melbourne morning about 8AM I was hurrying through one of the main streets in the centre of Melbourne's city area where most of the shops were still not open and I came upon a person 'sleeping rough'. She was wrapped up in the Salvos issue blue doona with just her very grey curly hair protruding. Cuddled up asleep next to her was an equally aged little white dog and behind her was a boxed portable sewing machine. I'm guessing these were the last two precious items this person owned.

This older woman - I shall call her Betty - is somewhat unusual because older women are not often detected 'sleeping rough'. They are using other stop gap methods, often just as precarious. But, about Betty. What if she needs to find a toilet at 3am nightly? What if she needs daily blood pressure medication, or even what if she has mild diabetes? Where is her GP or her local pharmacy - two things we may take for granted but just two instances where she needs to provide an address.

It's true, few are detected sleeping rough like Betty. No, for example, they're 'couch surfing'. Such a catchy title 'couch surfing' isn't it? Mainly it's at the home of a friend or with family. Let me just say it doesn't mean sleeping on the large, well sprung sofa in a warm living room with a lovely throw tossed nonchalantly across it. Nuh, instead it often means the flat old divan in the family room or the kid's play room where homework computers or toy items take priority. It also means creeping around in the early hours trying not to disturb anyone else in the house. Dressing and

preparing to depart at sun up for a day sometimes just wandering in a park in the cold. Can you imagine how this lifestyle effects a woman's mental state?

Or maybe hers is a day of unpaid duties like cooking, cleaning and child minding expected by the family whose house it is. No social life mixing with people of the same age and language. Yes 'couch surfing' is a catchy title we often hear, and we even use. It's not catchy cute, it's not dignified and it's not fun. But for more and more older women it's the only choice they feel they have left.

Insecurity of tenancy can be due to any of several matters such as lack of income, domestic violence, elder abuse. Inadequate and/or unfit housing, eg, caravans, living in a car, extremely overcrowded and risky boarding houses with no locks on doors. Illegal and unsafe accommodation in a garage sleeping on a foldup camp stretcher sharing the space with the owner's car and the smell of solvents all night... sometimes paying for it. Sleeping on the floor in the laundry room in the two bedroom home of the married offspring.

Many older women are hiding their feeling of embarrassment or shame and distress daily in whatever precarious options they use as housing. They could be someone you meet but they won't tell you. These people could have previously held down a position in any type of business. They'll hang out in private expensive rentals till all their savings are gone. They'll sell belongings to hang on a little longer.

A single crisis or a change in circumstances can mean homelessness for the older woman and for the first time in her life. Historically women have not been best paid, left the workforce to bear and raise children, been divorced or widowed - or just abandoned, not sustained with super or savings, and unfortunately many now are suffering elder abuse from offspring who bully them out of meagre savings and sometimes even their pension.

HAAG is an unique member driven, community based organisation in Melbourne working to house people 50 years and over on low income. Our persistence has resulted in some funding supplied by Victorian and Australian Governments. The DHHS Victoria funding enabled HAAG's Home at Last (HAL) initiative a few years ago to bring in more staff who are responsible for steady Housing Support. **And may I proudly state that 600 aged persons housed in the last 4 years alone are now living in secure affordable homes thanks to the HAL workers.** Sadly, the numbers are going up weekly of late and more clients in the 50s range not the 70s are on the books. We need to remind politicians of the older women at risk of homelessness at the ballot box. We need a national housing strategy designed for and age appropriate to older persons.

December



25

End of year opening hours

HAAG will be closed from Christmas Day on the 25th until the 2nd of January. Wishing everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy new year!

If you're having a crisis during this period you can call 1800 825 955 to get in touch with your local homelessness service.

January



17

Retirement Accommodation Action Group RAAG

Our RAAG meeting will kick off our Retirement Housing campaign for 2019 from 10am until 4pm on Thursday January the 17th. The next meeting will be held at the same time on Thursday February the 14th.

February



22

HAAG General Meeting

After a very successful and well attended AGM in November we're looking forward to the next members meeting.

Save the date for Friday February 22nd 11am - 1pm



Members and Staff catching up at the November General Meeting - Photos by Guruswamy Perumal

The Victorian Labor Government was re-elected by a landslide in November, running on a platform of “getting things done”. Labor now has a significant majority in both houses of Parliament. The Greens, who had the strongest election commitments on affordable housing and renters rights, were wiped out in the upper house and look like retaining three seats in the lower house, losing Northcote and gaining Brunswick. The Liberal National Party did not make any strong commitments to addressing housing affordability, and focused on releasing new land for more housing developments. They had a strong swing against them across the state.

Victorian Labor campaigned strongly on their rental reforms, which we supported via the “Make Renting Fair Campaign”. Thanks to our lobbying efforts, the new legislation, which comes into effect in 2020, has stronger rights for residents of caravan parks, including compensation provisions for closures. They also include other measures that are good for older renters, such as longer leases and the ability to make disability modifications.

Unfortunately, public housing was not a major election issue, despite the efforts of a range of different organisations and a ten day vigil at Parliament House by *Public Housing - Everybody's Business* (PHEB). During the election, Labor promised an additional 1000 public housing properties, mainly in the Geelong and Ballarat region, as well as continuing their Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan and the Homes for Victorians package. They continue to support the Public Housing Renewal program, which involves demolishing older-style “walk ups” in nine public housing estates across inner city Melbourne and replacing them with a mix of higher density social, public and private housing.



On the issue of the Retirement Housing, Labor was the only party not to commit to an Ombudsman before the election. Both the Greens and the Liberal National Party promised a Retirement Housing Ombudsman to resolve disputes in a free or low cost and binding way. This was a great result for the retirement housing campaign, who met with ministers and candidates for many months before the election. Unfortunately Labor did not commit to an Ombudsman, but undertook to work with us on the issue post-election. Heidi Victoria, the shadow minister for Consumer Affairs, who attended two of our parliamentary events and made election commitments to an Ombudsman, looks like losing her seat of Bayswater. Lidia Thorpe, who also committed to a retirement housing ombudsman lost her seat of Northcote.

VICTORIA VOTES 2018

Where do Victoria's parties stand on a Retirement Housing Ombudsman?

	LABOR	LIBERAL	THE GREENS
Establish an Ombudsman for Retirement Housing complaints	?	✓	✓
Free for residents	?	?	✓
Makes binding decisions	?	✓	✓
Will cover Villages, Parks and other forms of Retirement Housing	?	✓	✓

* <https://www.matthewguy.com.au/media-release/guy-victoria-retirement-housing-ombudsman/>
** https://dgn8a8pro7vhnv.cloudfront.net/agv/pages/18610/attachments/original/1543550913/AGV_Housing_Ombudsman.pdf?1543550913
Authorized by G. Brody, Consumer Action Law Centre, Level 6, 329 Queen Street, Melbourne 3000



New ministers

The Labor Government announced a new cabinet shortly after the election, which means we have new Ministers for Housing and for Ageing and Disabilities. The new housing minister is Richard Wynne, who is also the planning minister and member for Richmond. He has had previous experience as the housing minister, and we have written to him to request a meeting.

The new Ageing, Disabilities and Carers Minister is Luke Donnellan, who is the member for Parkenham. This is the first time there has been a minister for carers. He is also the new minister for multicultural affairs.

Consumer Affairs remains with Marlene Kairouz MP, who is also now the minister for suburban development.

Martin Foley, the former minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, is now minister for Mental Health, Equality and Creative Industries. With the election announcement of a royal commission into mental health we are sure he will continue to be busy!

We have written to all the new ministers to congratulate them on their appointments and request meetings with them to continue to advocate for the rights of older renters and people in housing stress.

As part of our commitment to inclusive practice and diversity, HAAG is working towards Rainbow Tick accreditation. The accreditation process assesses organisations against inclusive practice standards across the whole organisational culture, from governance to service delivery to ensure an organisation is a safe and inclusive space for all. By becoming rainbow tick accredited, HAAG will send a message to the LGBTI community that we are welcoming, responsive and understanding of their needs. By doing this, we can ensure that LGBTI elders feel safe to access our service and are provided with information on what their housing options are and what services can assist. This will ensure that they can act early and prevent a housing crisis.

We have conducted a preliminary audit of our organisation to identify what we are doing well and what not so well. We are currently in the process of making sure all the internal parts of our organisation are inclusive and safe, so we are prepared for when LGBTI clients access our service. We are developing new and updating existing policies and procedures, amending forms and creating resources to guide culturally sensitive support to the LGBTI community. Staff recently underwent LGBTI inclusive training where they gained insight into the unique experiences of LGBTI elders and the importance of using inclusive language. We have made updates to the website and are displaying visible welcoming signs throughout the office. We also have plans in place to start a reference group with members of the LGBTI community, so we can find out first-hand what makes LGBTI elders feel like a service is approachable, their good and bad experiences in accessing mainstream services and their understanding of housing options for older people.

In addition to our work internally, staff have supported the LGBTI community through attending various LGBTI forums and celebrating notable events. In October, our social work student volunteered at the Coming Back Out Ball- a spectacular social event celebrating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex, and Trans and Gender Diverse elders. The event aims to address the issues of social isolation and marginalisation and highlights an issue rarely discussed- the tendency for LGBTI elders to conceal part of their identities when accessing services. From the grand entrance, to the gold-themed makeup stand, and fabulous frocks, the night fostered inclusion and diversity and encouraged these elders back into the LGBTI community.



Photo by Bryony Jackson— All the Queen's Men

Over fifty people attended our Annual General Meeting in November this year, where members elected a new Committee of Management for the upcoming year. We launched three pieces of research on the day, all developed by HAAG. We strongly believe in the importance of evidence-based decision making backed by research and the research papers launched at our AGM will inform our advocacy and service delivery over the coming year. A summary of the research is below.

Is the Victorian Housing Register working?



The Victorian Housing Register, also known as the common waitlist, was introduced by the government to make the process of applying for public housing and community housing more transparent and simple by streamlining the application processes. While working as a Home at Last Intake worker, Tegan looked at the all the housing offers that

By Tegan Leeder, Masters Public Policy

had been made to our clients for the 12 month period after the Victorian Housing Register was implemented, to see if there was any difference in the way older people at risk of homelessness were housed, and to assess whether the VHR was working for our clients in the way it was intended to.

The main findings were that housing offers were still coming directly from the housing provider, rather than via the VHR process, and that some housing providers still require an additional application to be completed (not what the VHR intended). However, the offers that did come directly from the housing provider were often significantly quicker, sometimes less than a month, whereas those through the VHR were often around 12 months. It seems that the relationships established between the housing providers and our housing workers are still extremely important and help determine who gets housed and how quickly.

Experience of clients accessing retirement housing information

For a long time, our retirement housing workers have been providing information on retirement housing options to people who are ineligible for public housing. However, they were concerned that the information may not be assisting people to find housing. Leonie Bessant conducted research into this issue, by contacting people who had been given retirement housing information to see how effective it was for them.



Leonie Bessant, Psychology PHD research

Although clients were overwhelmingly happy with the service the retirement housing advocates provided, very low numbers of people were confirmed actually getting into retirement housing. Those that did tended to be the more computer literate, able to self-advocate, able to wait and more persistent people. Those who lacked confidence, lacked computer literacy or had health issues were unlikely to be able to follow up with retirement housing providers, who often had long waitlists and unclear application processes. This indicates that there is a need for intensive housing support, similar to the outreach services provided by the Home at Last service, for people to access retirement housing. It also points to the decline of the ILU sector, which is slowly being transformed away from low-cost housing into more lucrative forms of retirement housing or residential care.



Launch of Online Research Library (part of Ageing on the Edge National Project)

Over the last year, the Ageing on the Edge national project has been developing an online research library to collate as much research as possible on the topic of older people and housing.

Developed by Reuben Endean and supported by our volunteer Megan, who lives in Warrnambool, the research library now contains over 300 pieces of research from across the country and internationally. For the first time, all the research that we can find is stored in one place and able to be searched by topic, location, author and publisher. This research is freely available and not behind “paywalls”, as many academic journal articles tend to be. Another great feature of this research library is that anyone can submit articles to it, including members of the public. So if you find an article that you think may be suitable, you can submit it to the library. It is now on our website www.older tenants.org.au/research-library



Reuben Endean, Digital Communications Worker



Welcome to our new Committee of Management!

CHAIRPERSON PHYLL WILLIAMS



Phyll Williams is a retired university lecturer who received a HAAG pamphlet in the mailbox 8 years ago, and has been a member ever since. Living in an Independent Living Unit (ILU), Phyll brings her lived experience of older persons housing needs to HAAG and has been a dedicated member of HAAG's ILU working group, the Campaign and Policy Group, the Strategic Planning Group, the Ageing on the Edge National Project Group, and has served twice on HAAG's Committee of Management. She was elected as Chairperson in June 2017 and is looking forward to providing stability and consistency to the organisation.

Kris is passionate about housing justice because of the stream of enquiries she received from people struggling in insecure housing during her 14 years working at the Council on the Aged (COTA)'s Seniors Information service. Throughout these years at COTA, there were many opportunities to work with, and support, HAAG, advocating for secure and affordable housing for older people.

On her retirement from COTA Kris became a member of HAAG, she has been an elected member of the Committee of Management for the past 18 months, on the Finance Sub-Committee & is a volunteer peer educator for HAAG's housing information sessions.

She believes the current Committee of Management has made good progress in consolidating the organisation after a difficult time. Kris is committed to ensuring that the mission and values of HAAG are not open to compromise.



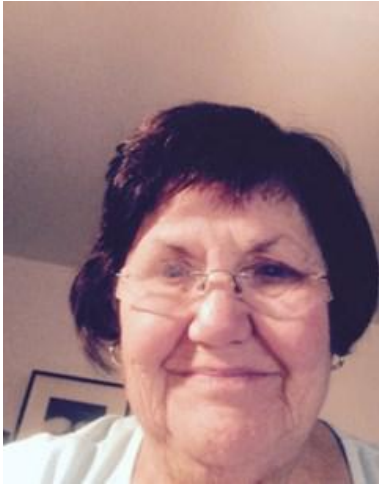
VICE-CHAIRPERSON KRIS SPARK

TREASURER—PETER SIBLY



Peter Sibly has worked the majority of his life in the not for profit sector and has held a number of different community housing positions in Latrobe Valley and western suburbs of Melbourne. Peter worked with the Mornington Peninsula Shire for six years in a social planning role and also completed 18 month International Development role in remote part of Timor Leste. Currently he is the General Manager of the United Housing Co-operative in Yarraville which manages 102 long term social housing properties. He has served as HAAG Treasurer since the Special General Meeting in June 2017, and brings management, finance and governance experience to the Committee.

SECRETARY—PAMELA YOUNG



Pamela Young is 75 years of age and has been on the Committee of Management Housing for the Aged Action Group since June 2018 as Secretary.

She volunteers with Community Radio and co-ordinates a Community program weekly and Jazz program Saturday nights. She is the co-host "Raise the Roof" for HAAG with producer and host Shane McGrath on 3CR. She is also the Membership Officer of the Robert Stolz Viennese Music Society. For 10 years she was the Supervisor at Glenloch Homes for the Elderly where she resides and when this job

was dissolved and a paid CEO was installed she found that she still wanted to help the Elderly in some way and joined Housing for the Aged Action Group.

The three charities that she supports in Melbourne are Pencil Community, Books for Disaster

MAEVE BROWNE-COOPER



Maeve Browne-Cooper "I graduated from the London School of Economics (LSE) with a BA, MA and Ph.D, and with a Post Grad in Labour Law from Melbourne University

I've travelled and lived in India, South Africa, (unfortunately during the apartheid years, but interesting), USA and Tehran for between eleven and eighteen months respectively.

I visited many other countries for shorter durations.

Since arriving in Australia in 1972 I've worked as a journalist. I've also worked in publishing and my final twelve years in Industrial Relations, being an Associate to the Deputy President of the Industrial Relations Commission of Victoria.

I've volunteered at the Sacred Heart Mission and spent some time teaching English to refugees."

CASSANDRA WILLIAMS



Cassandra Williams - "I have a background in managing service delivery functions across family violence, homelessness, disability and mental health services, and have experience forming and maintaining internal and external relationships at all levels of an organisation.

In my current role as a Strategic Projects Manager for McAuley Community Services for Women, I am managing the expansion of the homelessness service into regional Victoria, with a keen focus on housing for older women experiencing, or at risk of homelessness. The passion I have for supporting older people to positively age in place is mirrored in my postgraduate studies in

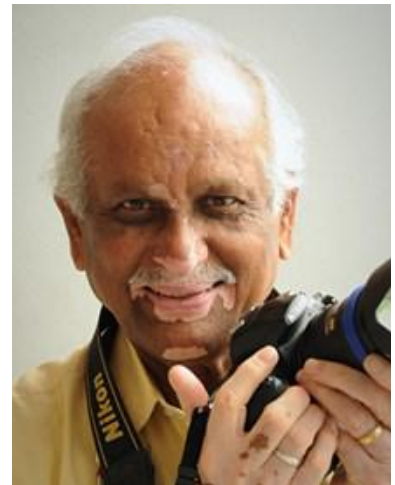
Community Psychology, with my Masters thesis and Honours dissertation both focusing on the ageing experiences of older New Zealand Maori. As a member of HAAG since 2017, I strongly relate to the values, aims and work done by the team."

Guruswamy Perumal - "I was born in Tenkasi south India and after completing school, joined in the postal department in 1957. In 1972 I joined as Warrant Officer in the Army Postal Service and served in many different cities and border areas. I completed my service in New Delhi 1996.

As a child keeping company with the Grand child of a great Tamil scholar T.K.C , I also developed and pursued several extracurricular interests that have stayed with me such as Philately, Match Box label and Numismatic (coin collection) and particularly photography. My expertise in photography led me to work as a freelance photographer in New Delhi and had the opportunity to photograph many politically and socially important people such as Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Bill Gates Presidents and Prime ministers of India , Film stars ,Miss. Worlds and many celebrities of India and abroad. Also I have done photography for the Governments of Tamil Nadu state, Kerala state, India Posts and Army Postal Service."

I am happily settled in Melbourne and continue my work in photography. My personal life is good due to my lovable and efficient wife Kokila, my two daughters, my four grand kids and their spouses – plus a great grandchild. I really thank God, my family and friends for keeping me happy always.

Here I am also involved in community service with NRISA, ECCV and other Indian communities.



GURUSWAMY PERUMAL

MAREE NORRIS



Maree Norris has been a member of HAAG since 1999 and has served on the Committee of Management a number of times, including as treasurer and as HAAG's representative on the Ross House Committee. She is involved in the Mayoress Committee and the Friendly Visiting Program in the City of Melbourne. Since 1965 she has been a Life Governor at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. She was instrumental in establishing legal services in Broadmeadows and is a member of the National Council for Women in Victoria. Her commitment to serving the community has not wavered over the years and as one of the longest term members of HAAG, she looks forward to returning to the management committee

to

Jodie Henry has over 20 years' experience in Strategic Communications and management, working in the corporate, public and not for profit sectors. The focus of her work in recent years has been in developing strategies to support social change and improved outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage.

Housing security is a key area of interest for Jodie, and a recurring issue for older people, people with disability and, increasingly, for women from all walks of life.



JODIE HENRY

Currently working for Villa Maria Catholic Homes, she is involved in the Australian Catholic Housing Alliance and takes an active interest in new and innovative models of housing. Jodie is also a member of the Public Relations Institute and Associated Member of the Institute of Community Directors Australia.

VICKY GUTSJAHR



Vicki Gutsjahr began her career as a teacher before teaching English as a second language and migrant education classes. Vicki has a long history of participating in community movements and serving on committees. Finding private rental unaffordable, Vicki utilised the services of HAAG and moved into an Independent Living Unit (ILU). Shortly after, she joined the ILU working group. In 2015-16 Vicki served as HAAG's Chair.

MARY-ANN WRIGHT



Mary-Ann Wright has been an active member of Housing for the Aged Action Group for the past twelve months, attending HAAG general meetings and is training to become a HAAG peer educator.

Mary-Anne is keen to support HAAG's vision by bringing a wealth of work and lived experience in the social housing and homeless sectors.

Sue is the daughter of one of the founding members of HAAG, Molly Hadfield OAM, and so brings a continuity of values and purpose to the organisation. Sue has recently retired after 35 years as the Business Manager at the North Fitzroy Primary School, and was responsible for Finances and Human Relations at the school. Having experienced homelessness as a child Sue is very aware of the issues faced by people on low incomes trying to find long term, affordable housing. She has been a member of HAAG's finance sub-committee since June



SUE MARINO

Farewells to 2018 committee members and friends

Sue Leigh



ChenSu Ooi



Ena Ahern



Volunteers at HAAG



Seniors Week this year saw HAAG have a stall at the Seniors Hub at the Melbourne Town Hall, where our volunteers gave out information about our Home at Last service and how to become a member of HAAG. We also had a display in the window at Ross House for the month of October, which resulted in a number of passers by dropping in to find out more about their housing options

On the 5th of December—International Day of the Volunteer, three fantastic volunteers came into the office and helped our workers with a long-overdue spring clean. They spent hours sorting out our storage and stationary area, and the office is looking fantastic!

We have a number of volunteers working with us at the moment, including a studious volunteer in Portland who is helping us update the research library, and we are seeking more for some specific roles in the new year.

The volunteers we need are:

- Community educators- people who feel comfortable presenting information about housing options in a powerpoint format to groups of people, as part of a partnership with COTA
- Peer Educators- people who have had an experience of homelessness or housing stress who would like to use their story to help others
- Promotional Volunteers- people who would like to help HAAG to approach groups such as Rotary, Lions Club etc. with funding proposals

All of these roles are supported by Gemma, our community education worker, who can provide training. If you are interested in any of these roles, please get in contact with our office on 9654 7389 or fill out the form on our website at www.older tenants.org.au/volunteer



Volunteers at HAAG on International Volunteers Day

Welcome to our new staff members!



Welcome to new Housing Outreach worker, Nese Duran, who comes to us from Launch Housing and who completed her social work placement with us a couple of years ago. Nese is bilingual and speaks Turkish.

Welcome also to new Housing Support Intake worker Sotiria Nika, who recently completed her social work placement with us. Sotiria is also bilingual, and speaks Greek.





Welcome to Mariel Zuniga, a student studying a Diploma of Community Management, who has started her placement with us working on our strategic plan. Another bilingual person, Mariel speaks Spanish and works at United Spanish Latin American Welfare Centre in aged care.

Farewells to Tegan and Crystal

Farewell to Tegan Leeder and Crystal McDonald, who both worked at HAAG for more than six years. They will both be missed, and we thank them for their long years of service.





Rena with housing worker Paola Posso at her new home

Rena* (71 Years Old) was sharing accommodation with students due to her lack of housing affordability. The students she lived with were untidy and left her to clean up after them. They frequently left food in the fridge until it became rotten. This affected Rena's food supplies making her food inedible. Rena experienced abusive and aggressive behaviour towards her by one of the housemates. This situation made her feel stressed and impacted negatively her health.

Rena contacted Home at Last intake and referral line at the end of April 2018 requesting Housing assistance. Rena explained that she wanted to leave the place she was living in but she could not afford private rental accommodation. All the issues she was facing in the house she was living in were triggering depression and anxiety. She needed help to find secure long term accommodation and affordable housing where she could enjoy living independently.

In May, an outreach worker was allocated to assist Rena with secure and affordable housing options. Client and

outreach worker worked together completing the social housing applications.

In June 2018, the Department of Health and Housing offered her a one bedroom public housing unit in one of the areas she had chosen in her housing application.

Rena was very happy and accepted the offer. She had to wait a couple of weeks to move into the property as the unit was under maintenance.

Rena signed the lease with the office of housing at the end of July and was assisted by Home at Last Removalist Service and the outreach worker to move out of her previous house and into the new one. *not her real name

180

Female
Clients

111

Male
Clients

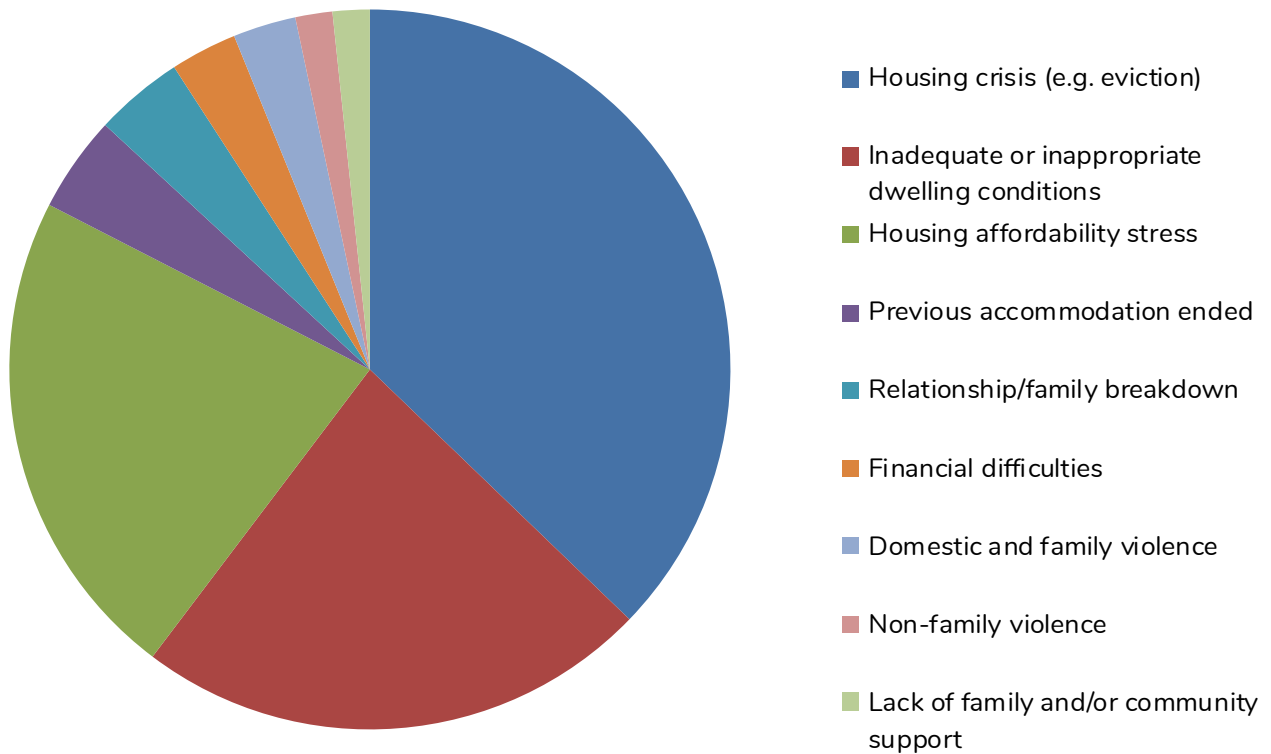
56%

from CALD
Backgrounds

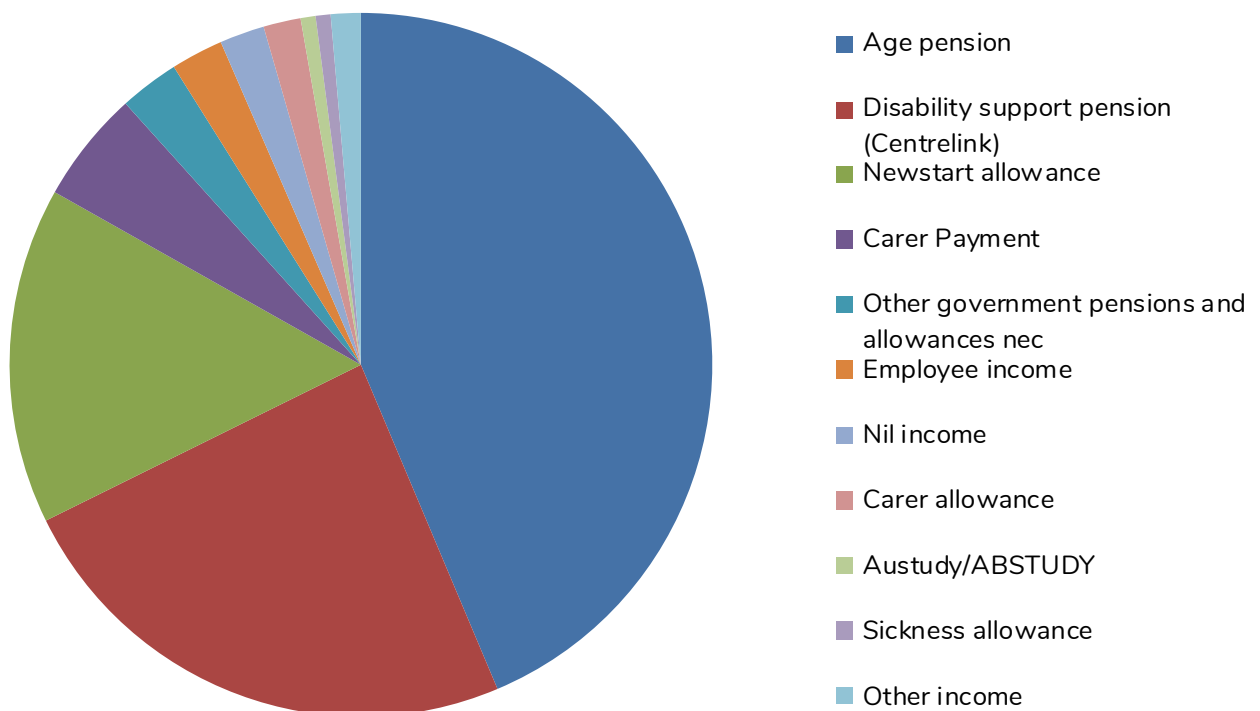
21

Clients
Housed

Main Reasons for Seeking Assistance at HAAG



Main income source of people seeking assistance



Diversity Reference Group 2018

HAAG's Diversity Reference Group just completed its first year of operation! It has been a busy and exciting year and we are looking forward to seeing what amazing things the group can achieve in 2019. These have been our achievements in 2018:

- Establishing the group, its purpose and its terms of Reference
- Establishing knowledge of HAAG and Home at Last through various guest speakers
- Development of the Community Advocate Role
- Interviewed by researchers from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Susan Feldman and Harriet Radermacher about the experiences of older women from culturally diverse backgrounds, which will be part of a report to be published next year.

The group has delivered community education or volunteered for the following :

Ballarat Seniors Group, St Albans

3ZZZ Radio- Info in Croatian/ Bosnian, Brunswick

3CR Raise the Roof, Carlton

Indian Seniors Association of Victoria, Glen Waverly

NARISA- Northern Region Indian Seniors Association, Northcote

Southern Migrant Resources Centre, Seniors Leadership Forum, Lynbrook

Aged and Disability Forum St Albans Community Centre

Serbian Pensioners group Keysborough

Salvation Army, Dandenong

Visited Federal MP for La Trobe, Mr. Jason Wood

Casey North Community information and support centre

Information stand at the Seniors Festival, Town Hall

St Anthony Seniors Club, Thomas Town

Hume Hub, (Assyrian Chaldean) Group



Lilliana and Indy at the Seniors Leadership Forum in Lynbrook

New Grant Received for CALD work

A small grant was received from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to deliver Community Education to CALD Communities

1. Deliver 6 in-language information sessions to people who are socially isolated
2. Enable the continuation of a successful HAAG Cultural Diversity Reference Group, ensuring that our organisation is culturally responsive and its services are accessible to people from the targeted communities.
3. Continue to support Community Advocates to engage with isolated people in their community

Helping retirement housing residents get repairs



Mr and Mrs Armstrong* live in a for-profit retirement residential park (aka 'lifestyle' village) located in a rural area outside of Melbourne. Mr Armstrong called up for assistance in requesting that village management complete repairs to their property. He explained that over 6 months earlier, workers hired by management had backed a waste truck into their unit and damaged the guttering on the veranda. Mr Armstrong understood that the damage wasn't especially urgent or dangerous, but he wanted the guttering to be fixed in a timely manner. He was concerned about the possibility of heavy rain causing the gutter to overflow and that any damage would reduce the value of their unit.

The village management said they would repair the gutter, but provided no time-frame for this. No village maintenance worker or management staff contacted Mr Armstrong to organise a time to come over and assess and repair for 6 months. Mr and Mrs Armstrong stated that between them they called the village office over 10 times in that 6 month period to enquire as to when they could expect these repairs to be completed. They received no repairs and no response. Mr Armstrong is a reasonable and realistic man, he understood that there may have been other urgent repairs in the village that needed to be attended to first, but the lack of communication, transparency and repairs were increasingly concerning him.

Mr Armstrong and a Retirement Housing Worker discussed what assistance would be the most effective. Mr Armstrong initially was considering submitting a compensation claim under Australian Consumer Law, but the quote required to establish losses may be been equal to the cost of the repairs - Mr Armstrong thought this would not be worth it. They decided that the best step was HAAG's retirement housing worker contacting the village management on behalf of Mr and Mrs Armstrong requesting the repairs be completed within two weeks before further action would be pursued. The worker posted the letter but did not receive a response. Mr Armstrong and the worker decided that a follow up email to the CEO and the management was the next step to ensure the letter had been received. Fifteen minutes after this email was sent, a maintenance person attended and fixed the guttering. Mr and Mrs Armstrong were very pleased that this issue was settled promptly with the support of an advocate and they could get on with enjoying their home and retirement without worrying about future heavy rainfall or a future reduced sale price for their unit.

The Retirement Housing Workers can be contacted on 9654 7389, Option 2 or via email on retirement@oldertenants.org.au *not their real name