



older tenants voice

Housing for the Aged Action Groups Quarterly Newsletter Winter 2023



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

FIGHTING FOR HOUSING JUSTICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1983



To celebrate HAAG's 40th anniversary we want to make a quilted scrap banner with pieces contributed by members and staff to represent all the people coming together to advocate for housing justice for older people.

Everyone who is interested in participating can make a single square from old clothes or scrap fabric at home with a letter on it to spell out a slogan such as:

**HOUSING JUSTICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE IS
A RIGHT NOT A PRIVILEGE**

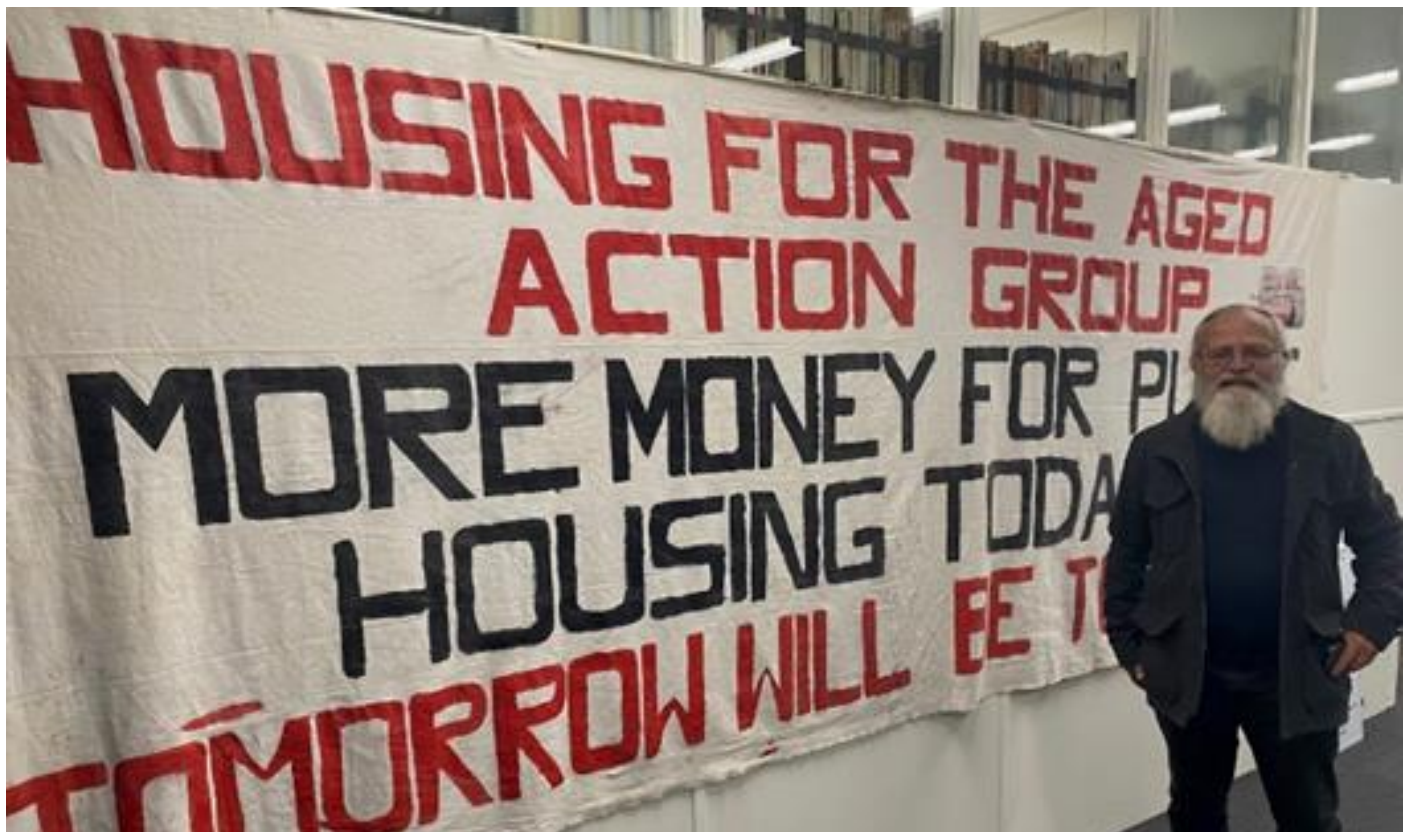
Quilting has a radical history of social justice, connection and inclusion from First Nations Peoples' Possum Skin Coats to the Rajah quilt made by women convicts.

If you are interested in being part of this please contact Fiona Waters and she will get in touch with you about the details such as size, colour, fabric, and your letter!

Fiona.Waters@oldertenants.org.au



HAAG member and volunteer June Wilkinson with a quilt she made to give to newly housed clients of Home at Last.



With the new office set up we now have space for the HAAG's historical banner which was painted in 1983 and has featured in lots of HAAG's protests, meetings and photos over the years. Here is HAAG founding member Bernie Duff who painted it!

CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME



Hi everyone

Welcome to our Winter edition. A big hello to all and especially the new members who may be receiving their first Newsletter.

I can't believe we have entered the midwinter month of June. The weather has turned quite cold practically overnight. I hope you are keeping warm and avoiding colds flus and covid!

It is alarming that Covid seems to have reared its ugly head again so be cautious and stay well.

It was lovely to see so many people returning to the General Meeting in person and we enjoyed a lovely meeting and a great lunch afterwards. Hope we can see more people at the next general meeting. A big thanks to Reuben for collecting information and sending out these Newsletters to us it certainly is interesting. If you didn't hear about the quilt project that Fiona Waters etc. has in place. Please contact her on email fiona.waters@oldertenants.com and she can give you the details. I must do this myself in the next week.

As Chairperson of the Committee of Management I would like to thank all the staff of HAAG for the great job they do.

Pam Young,
Chairperson

WELCOMES AND FAREWELLS



Fiona Waters has stepped out of the Retirement Housing team and into Community Engagement + Chief Quilter



Leila Keating steps in to Fiona's role as our newest Retirement Housing Advice Service worker!

General Meetings

Save the dates for our upcoming General Meeting on the 17th of August and AGM on the 16th of November.

We hope to make both into big events to celebrate our 40th birthday as the only organisation dedicated to older people's housing justice! Here are some photos of our May General Meeting so you're inspired to make it to the next one!

HAAG's Library Tour

HAAG is getting out and about in the community this winter, hosting more sessions to help older people access affordable housing.

On the 12th of July we'll be at Broadmeadows library from 12-1pm.

Then on the 7th of August we'll head over to the Kew Library from 10-11am for a special session during Homelessness week.

And the following night the 8th of August we'll be at Fitzroy Library from 6-7pm talking about the about the experiences of housing stress and homelessness for older LGBTIQ+ people.



Finance worker Libby Heath enjoying a cuppa with treasurer Karen Abols



Phyll Williams and Kokila catching up



Sharing lunch and stories together in the Molly meeting room



Vanessa Heart with the Jennifers Martin and Brown

Get HAAG to come to you!

Are you a member of a group like a bowls club, walking group, coffee club, water aerobics troupe?

Would you like one of the community education team here at HAAG to come to one of your catch ups to have a chat about housing information and our care finder service to help access aged care?

It could be useful information for yourself, your family and friends or other people in your community to learn about the risk factors and where to go for help if they need it now or in the future.

Get in touch with Fiona Waters or Rebecca Cook to chat about what the information sessions are like and when we are free!

Fiona.waters@oldertants.org.au

rebecca.cook@oldertenants.org.au

(03) 9654 7389



Community members gathered for HAAGs presentation at the Rosebud Library in June.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

We marked World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on the 15 on June by getting together in the office and wearing purple.

Elder abuse is mistreatment of an older person that is committed by someone with whom the older person has a relationship of trust such as a partner, family member, friend or carer. Elder abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect. Elder maltreatment can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences.

HAAG reminds people that having safe and affordable housing, for both older people and their adult children, helps prevent elder abuse. Elder Abuse is everyone's business!



Fiona Waters, Fiona York and Claire Hurren marking World Elder Abuse Awareness day by wearing purple

The Victorian Budget contained measures to address some of the challenges older people experience. There is \$141 million to install air conditioners in high-rise public housing towers, which will improve the lives of many.

Also welcome is funding for planning initiatives to help support housing growth for those people most risk of homelessness including older women, measures aimed at addressing elder abuse, and to provide better residential aged care facilities. Additionally, there was new funding for a Pride in Ageing pilot which seeks to strengthen the health, wellbeing, social and economic outcomes of older LGBTIQ+ Victorians.

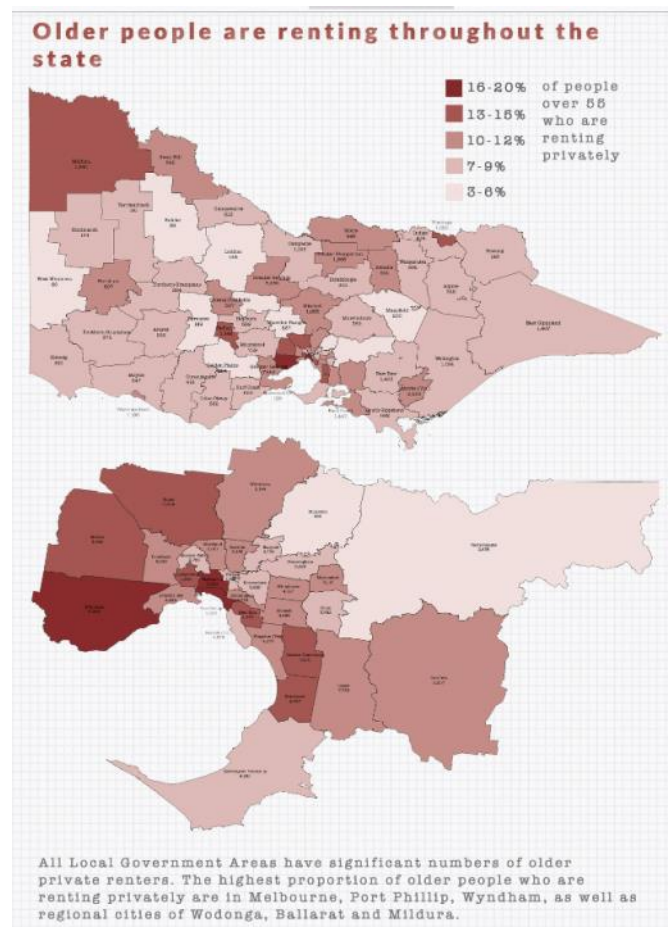
Our analysis of the 2021 Census found that the number of Victorians over 55 who do not own their own home has increased by 200,000 over the past decade. Additionally over a quarter of people over 55 and renting privately in Victoria had gross household incomes of less than \$40,000.

When older people on low incomes are renting they're at increased risk of homelessness. As the number of older renters continues to rise, that will only increase demand for public and community housing.

It's pleasing to see early intervention being funded for other cohorts because it works. We would have liked to see early intervention funding be expanded for older people. That would help programs like Home at Last prevent more older Victorians from experiencing homelessness in the first place.

This Victorian Budget did not include any additional investment in public and community housing beyond what's already been announced. If Victoria is to be a place where we can age well, then we have to invest in more public and community housing to ensure older people on low incomes have access to affordable housing options.

That requires at least 60,000 public and community homes to be built by 2030 and adequately funding housing and homelessness services to better support older people in Victoria.



Map showing geographic distribution of older renters across Victoria in 2011. See the full Victorian census analysis at oldertenants.org.au/sites/default/files/decades_of_decline_2011-21_victoria.pdf

Barack Beacon is a public housing estate in the Port Melbourne area, built in 1982 and across the road from Port Phillip Bay. The estate is an example of an unusual housing architecture based upon a UK model that is now heritage protected in England, but meanwhile here in Victoria is slated for demolition under the Big Housing Build Public Housing Renewal Program.

Around 300 residents were told at Christmas 2021 that they would be relocated, as the estate was to be demolished and replaced with a mixture of private housing and community housing. Workers from Homes Victoria set up an office in one of the empty apartments and began to interview residents about where they wanted to move to. Unfortunately, one

of our members informed us that some of the older tenants on the estate were not getting their needs met, and there was a lack of information and support for tenants. HAAG advocated for more support for these older tenants, and Victorian Public Tenants Association became more active in their support to advocate for their needs to Homes Victoria.

A group of tenants formed a group to try to save Barack Beacon from demolition, and an architect firm, OFFICE, drew up plans for an alternative vision for the estate, called Retain, Repair and Reinvest (RRR). This vision was developed in consultation with the residents, and would retain the existing housing, repair it to modern environmental and accessibility standards, and include



Front and rear photos of a block at Barak Beacon showing the blocks of flats to be in sound condition. The RRR proposal looks at minimal intervention to bring these flats up to contemporary standards. Photos by Ben Hosking

more housing to be built in some of the open spaces. The plan was shown to be more cost effective for government, saving \$88 million, as well as more environmentally friendly, and with very little disruption to residents.

The group of tenants called upon the Government to implement this plan, and asked for a meeting with the Minister to discuss it. One resident, Margaret Kelly, took the issue a step further and occupied the building of the Department and the Minister on 50 Lonsdale Street, refusing to leave until they agreed to meet with her. They agreed, but the only thing on the agenda for the meeting is to discuss where Margaret is to move to, rather than a discussion about the future of Barack Beacon to save it from demolition.

On 27 May, a rally to Save Barack Beacon was held on the estate (pictured below), attended by around 60 people including current and former residents of Barack Beacon and public housing tenants from nearby areas. Barack Beacon has become symbolic of a broader issue in Victoria, and

across the country, where public housing is being demolished, the land sold or leased to developers, who then build new private apartments, with all former public housing transferred to the community housing sector. The tenants lives are disrupted, the community dispersed, and when and if they return, they will not be returning to public housing.

There are only a handful of people left at Barack Beacon. Most tenants have been moved into private rental properties head leased by Homes Victoria, or into spot purchased apartments. The cost to Government for this is unknown, and although tenants have been promised to return to the estate, there is no information on when this will happen, or what they will return to.

Listen to Margaret Kelly talk about receiving the news of the demolition of her home oldertenants.org.au/podcast/margaret-kelly
Listen to OFFICE architects explain their report oldertenants.org.au/podcast/office



NSW elected a new Labor Government in March. We look forward to working with them on our Ageing on the Edge NSW priorities. Many thanks to our NSW Lived Experience Advocacy Group (LEAG) Members for their advocacy to raise the issue of older people and homelessness in NSW leading up to the election. We also want to thank all our members from NSW who engaged with candidates and Members of Parliament.

Media attention on older people and their experiences of homelessness is growing in NSW. We have tried to highlight different aspects of this issue through various media outlets (highlights pictured below)

Changes to 'seeker diaries' requirement

NSW Ageing on the Edge was critical of requiring people in temporary accommodation to complete a 'rental diary' or 'seeker diary' to demonstrate they are actively looking for housing. In our submission to the Parliamentary inquiry into homelessness

among older people over 55 in NSW, we made a recommendation to remove this requirement as it is unnecessary and punitive. The Committee supported this recommendation, and we are thrilled to learn that the Minister Rose Jackson has scrapped the requirement from 1st July 2023. In the media statement she stated that "in the face of a housing and rental crisis, we want to remove unnecessary requirements and the seeker diary is definitely one of them."

We were also happy to see the new government remove a ban on secret rental bidding included in legislation, as we were concerned it would simply encourage public auctions for renters to pay more to get a lease!

We congratulate the NSW Government for taking proactive measures to address these challenges and hope to work closely with them to implement the other recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry, including funding for the service model.



Lyn retired with little super and unable to pay the rent. Her story is not uncommon

7:30 / By Leigh Sales, Kirsten Robb, and Laura Francis

Posted Mon 30 Aug 2021 at 7:15am, updated Mon 30 Aug 2021 at 2:52pm



Lyn Bailey thought her retirement was going to be 'pretty rosy'. (ABC)



Inquiry lays bare homelessness crisis facing older women in NSW

By Heath Parkes-Hupton

Posted Sun 26 Feb 2023 at 7:15am



Desperate families are waiting a decade for public housing in Australia as demand soars amid the cost of living crisis. Sarah Harris met with some families trapped on that list, hoping and waiting for a place to call home.

#TheProjectTV



Public Housing Waitlist Has Aussie Families Waiting Decades For A Home

David was camping with his dog Timmy on the Murray River near Cobram. He had been on the priority housing waiting list for 5 years. David said he had contacted a crisis housing access point several times but he was told there was no housing.

He'd heard about a Housing Information session organized by HAAG at the Cobram Community Centre in February, and decided to come along!

Following up in early March, HAAG case worker Anne met David at Cobram Library to undertake an assessment and assisted him to complete an application for priority housing. Anne was able to upgrade the application from Over 55s Special Housing Needs to the highest priority of the Victoria Housing Register. In addition, Anne also lodged an application with provider Uniting for Independent Living accommodation in Healesville.

David expressed that he would like to live closer to Ringwood area where his family live but still in Rural area.

Then on the 4th of April a meeting of service providers was organized by HAAG in Alexandra to encourage a collaborative approach to addressing the needs of those who are homeless or in unsustainable housing. One of the speakers was a worker from Seymour Housing (DFFH). The speaker mentioned there were some vacancies coming up the Over 55s public housing in Alexandra and Yea.

Immediately after the meeting Anne contacted David to see if he was interested

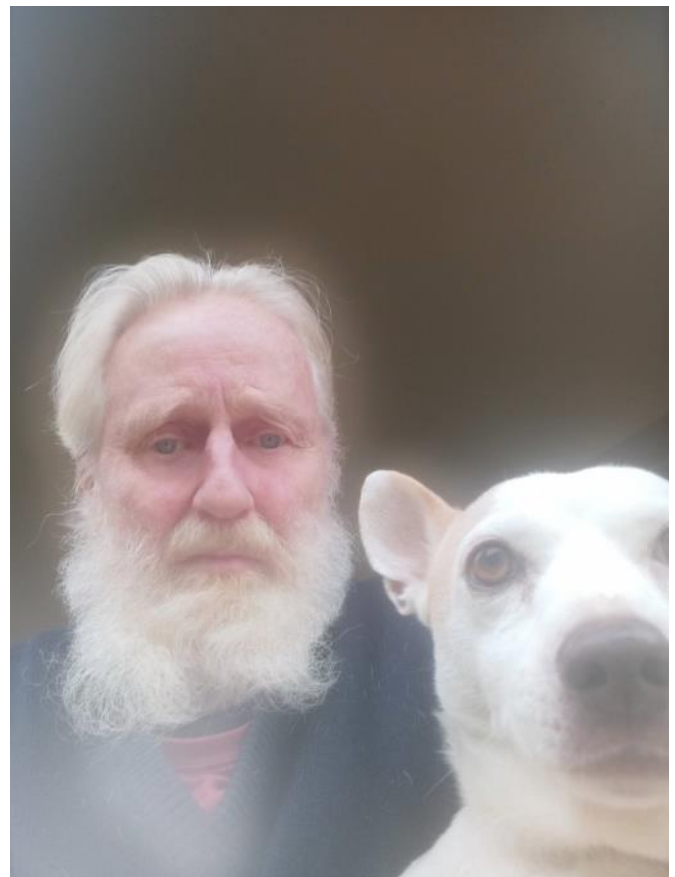
in living in Yea or Alexandra and he said yes.

Anne emailed the worker from Seymour Housing and she updated David's application, and the very next day April 5th David was offered a property in Alexandra!

David signed the lease and got the keys on April 28th and has moved in.

Anne has organized bed and whitegoods for David. David thanked Anne saying "you've been a big part of a miracle."

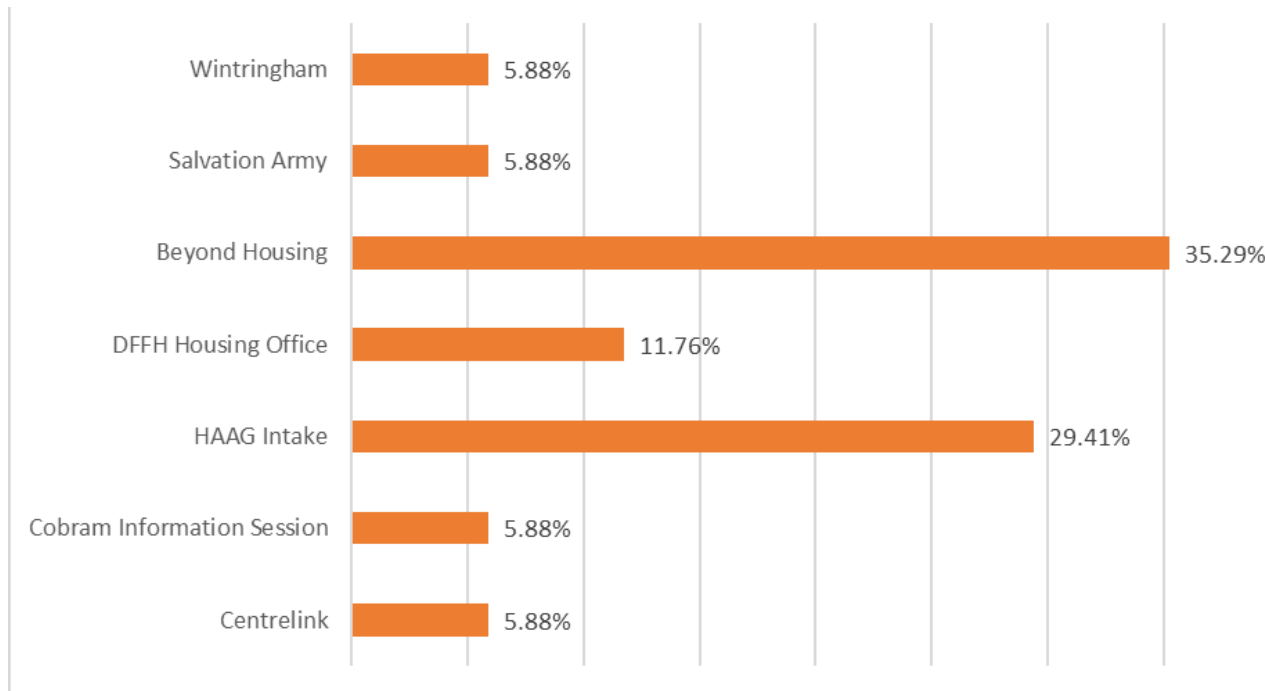
David's great housing outcome is a great example of the collaboration between the HAAG workers in the Goulburn-Hume region, along with Seymour Housing staff.



David and his dog Timmy, happy to be settled closer to Ringwood and in safe, secure and affordable public housing.

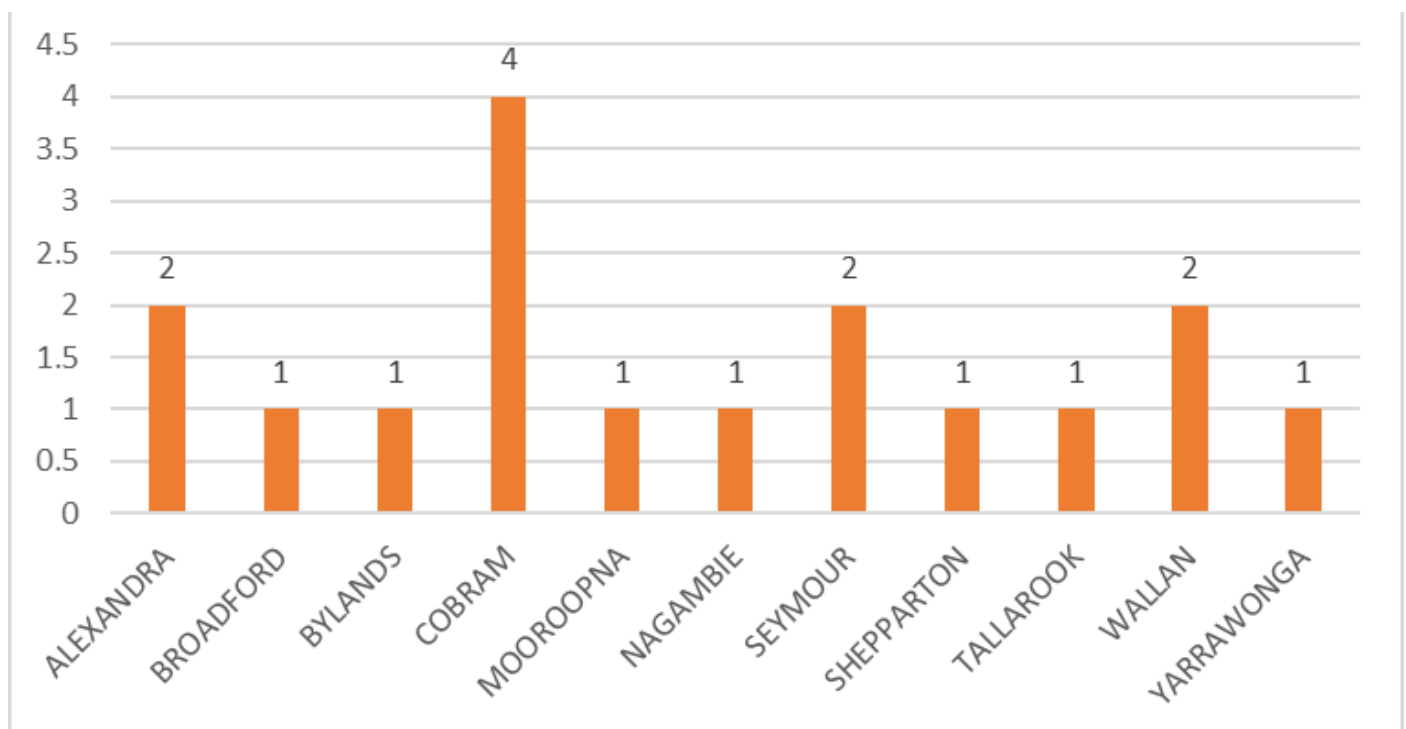
Stories like Davids illustrate the importance of networking with other organisations in the Housing and Homelessness sectors, especially in the pilot project region where HAAG is a new service provider. Our last quarters data shows how this networking and information sharing sessions is translating into people who need the service are finding out about us through other organisations.

Referral source of Clients 1st Quarter 2023



We are also having success in translating networking and publicity into receiving clients from across the large Central Victorian Region.

Locality of Clients 1st Quarter 2023



Dandenong Retirement Housing Information session.

On March 30, more than 50 residents came to Dandenong Town Hall for an information session about their rights in retirement housing. HAAG had spoken to lots of older renters in the area and kept hearing that many people just didn't know how to get information or help when they needed it. Given some of the shocking stories we were hearing about things management were getting away with, we were keen to get the word out to as many people as possible.

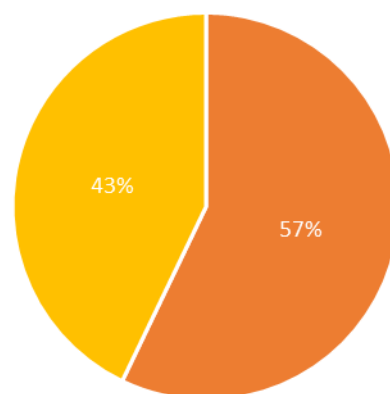
Shane from HAAG along with Kerry from the Disability Discrimination Legal Service and Cathie from Peninsula Community Legal Centre spoke to residents about their rights under the law, and what they can do if they were being treated unfairly. All speakers emphasised the importance of getting advice. We all hear from retirement housing residents that their management told them this or that – you've got to do this, you can't do that, you've got to get rid of the other. Often by the time they are fed up enough to get help, they've already done what the

manager asked – and it's much harder to wind things back to try and fix them, than if they'd gotten advice in the first place.

Many people are scared that management will retaliate if they assert themselves too much – and that can be a reasonable fear. But getting advice just means finding out what your rights and options are, and if you don't want to go further your manager never needs to find out. But getting advice and information can give you peace of mind and certainty, even if you never act on it. As the chart below shows, for over half of the calls the Retirement Housing Advice Service receives, we only need to provide information or referral to other services. In the other 43% of circumstances, we are able to open a case and pursue the appropriate actions to uphold the rights of the Retirement Housing residents.

HAAG would like to thank the residents' committee members who helped organise and promote this event – we couldn't have done it without you.

Retirement Service Information and Advocacy 1st Quarter 2023



■ Info & Referral Only ■ Case Open/Resolved/Successful



HAAG's Shane McGrath with speakers from the Disability Discrimination Legal Service and the Peninsula Community Legal Centre

Our Retirement Accommodation Action Group has a new blog! Want to know what goes on behind the scenes when Retirement Housing residents get together and plot to overthrow the system? Well now you can, read our latest posts and join the group at raag.older tenants.org.au/blog

Here is a preview of our latest posts

We need a managers manager to manage the managers!

This month RAAG discussed the 4 key asks from the Retirement Housing Matters Campaign, with a focus on the need for manager training and accreditation and how this could practically be implemented, regulated and enforced.

The group brainstormed different ideas such as a Cert IV in Retirement Housing management that would require people to be tested on and pass a trade standard.

The group thought the course could include training on: legislation such as the Retirement Villages Act and Residential Tenancies Act, skills in selling property and explaining contracts, having a community services skill set and a person centered point of view, mediation training, first aid training, and gerontological training.

Though this sounds helpful, members also troubleshooted some potential flaws in that system. Who would authorise it, and who would be required to do the training? The CEO? The caretakers? The middle management? Who would regulate it and enforce if people were untrained?

Members thought that a lot of the issues arise from the personality type of specific staff members. The village rules can be consistent, but a change in management can really change how they get implemented, and as one member said, “you can’t train someone to be a nice person”.

Gender Equality in Retirement Housing

Last month RAAG discussed the recently released National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality Discussion Paper to talk about how gender inequality has impacted people, especially older women living in different forms of retirement housing. The members that attended this meeting were all women, and discussed the inequality they experienced in their personal and professional lives and how that has impacted their housing and financial situations as they have aged.

Discussion revolved around superannuation, career glass ceilings, pay differences, lack of childcare, perceptions of men and women in society and how care and caring roles in the home and at work are not acknowledged or valued.

Members relayed stories of never being promoted but repeatedly having to train new male managers in the job they could do better, of being told “you don’t need superannuation because you have a husband to look after you”, and of quitting a job and finding out a man had been hired immediately after at a higher rate.

Letters to the editor

We mean Public!

Well here's a public housing tenant who wants to see more public housing. Just no more public housing areas where every house is public housing.. spec purchases, every new subdivision must have public housing.

And I mean public housing, not community housing or whatever term they are using, where a small group of people gets to decide who is good enough for their houses.

I don't care what the workers want...unless they live in public housing. Community development. By the community, for the community, not devised by people with no lived experience of being homeless and no experience of real poverty.

Funny though. The voices of those in public housing are silenced. By the "experts".

Bron Ferne

How can we afford to live?

We need more affordable housing in general, people cannot go on living outside of their affordability and expectations, but they are, when is enough?

How can we go on putting up with the rising cost of living? How can we afford to live while Greedy Landlords push for higher rents?

Stop the rot! Build more public housing and stop selling off public housing to greedy

investors to fill their greasy pockets.

Lets stand united in saying WE NEED MORE PUBLIC HOUSING AND WE NEED IT NOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Dennis George

I hate landlords

Trigger warning - rant follows. I hate landlords. I hate my powerlessness as a tenant. They can evict me if I ever challenge them. Easy to fill with new tenants. The papers keep reporting that rents are out of control, which gives landlords license to put rents up. An electrician came over without notice yesterday. Last week I got an email that the landlord would visit and let himself in to the property (outside and garage) "one night this week". I didn't see him but I assume he was here at some stage and that's why the electrician came. Every time there is a request for a repair, he puts the rent up. This time it wasn't even me that asked for the repair because I know better. The electrician told me that the agent ordered it to comply with the law. I should have known to expect this. We've got windows held up with planks of wood that he refuses to fix. We had no toilet for two weeks until I gave up pestering them and booked the plumber myself.

Add your views to Older Tenants Voice by writing to the editor by email haag@oldertenants.org.au, commenting on facebook or sending snail mail to 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne.



3CR Radiothon

It's Radiothon time at 3CR and we are fundraising for our show, Raise the Roof, the only radio show focusing on older people's housing issues.

Recent episodes have featured interviews

with Elder Rights Advocacy, National Shelter, and the Disability Discrimination Legal Service. You can tune in at 3CR.org.au/haag, subscribe wherever you get your podcasts, and make sure to donate to keep the show on the air at

givenow.com.au/cr/haag_raisetheroof

Playlist of the Season

With the price of rent going through the roof and landlords bleeding tenants for everything they've got, renters have a lot of reasons to want to scream. So we've picked out 10 of the best punk tracks from classic Dead Kennedys to skater-punk and some current local acts. Listen in at oldertenants.org.au/punks



Siouxsie and the Banshees -
Happy House



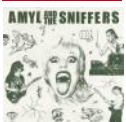
The King Blues -
Let's Hang the Landlord



Dead Kennedys -
Let's Lynch the Landlord



L7 -
Let's Lynch the Landlord



Amyll and the Sniffers -
Gacked on Anger



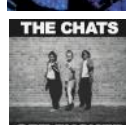
Green Day -
Welcome to Paradise



The Police -
Landlord



Pennywise -
Homeless



The Chats -
Price of Smokes



Gun Laws -
Killing the Landlord

Housing for the Aged Action Group

Level 1, Ross House 247-251 Flinders Lane,

Melbourne 3000

ADMIN: 9654 7389

Print Post Approved

100002348

SURFACE

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

www.olderrenters.org.au 1300 765 178 haag@olderrenters.org.au



Fighting for Housing Justice for older people since 1983

HAAG offers FREE confidential advice, housing and support to over-50's



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

The HAAG staff team of May 2023.
Cover photo of members of the friendly housing support team. All photos thanks to Guruswamy Perumal