



older
tenants
voice



Merry Christmas!

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

DECEMBER 2016 | SUMMER EDITION

CHAIRPERSONS WELCOME

I am honoured to be elected to the position of Chairperson for another year. We welcome to the committee of management new members Barney De Witt, Wyn Stenton, and Robert Bradshaw. Office bearers: Gerri McDonald Deputy Chair, Joane McKnight Secretary, Valerie Edwards, Treasurer.

Comittee Members: Bob Brooks, Sue Leigh, Sally Stabback, Alicia Strobbe & Helen Vallack. We thank our going members Maree Norris, Phyll Williams, Gordon Beard, Vicki Gutsjahr, and Bep Nickolson for their valuable contribution they have made during their time on the COM..

Our AGM was held on the 17th November with special guest speaker Gerard Mansour Commissioner for Seniors Victoria. Gerard is a passionate advocate for the needs of older people who are marginalized and have special needs. He spoke of the vital importance of belonging to community, friends and family and having value and purpose in our lives as we age.

Lives that have often been marked by fundamental changes in roles and responsibilities and having value and purpose in life and the benefits of belonging is fundamental to a sense of well being.

Gerard presented lifetime memberships to Carmel McMennemin and Francis Swann and launched Our Older Persons Strategy. He also presented April Bragg and Jeff Fielder with an award in recognition of their service and dedication to housing justice over many years.

I remember hearing Jeff and April speak to an Inquiry into Adequacy and Future directions of Public Housing in 2008. They spoke about the life changing impacts the service had on older people in housing stress - usually private renters- and of the outcomes they had been able to achieve in their lobbying.

Nine years later April and Jeff have never given in or given up and thier dedication is recognized by COM, Members ,Staff and the wider community sector in which we work.

I wish you all a very peaceful, happy and safe Christmas and may the New Year bring you many exciting new challenges. Till next time, enjoy the summer months after a long cold winter.

RADIO 3CR:

City Limits-3rd Wed of Month - 9am
Raise the Roof- 4th Wed of Month - 6pm

We love sharing our members stories. Want to be our next member in the spotlight? Or do you have something to say on radio?

Contact Shane on 03 9654 7389



– Daisy



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

JAS STRETEN

In November I finished a short project at HAAG. Originally I found out about the organisation when I was studying Mandarin at Ross House. At the beginning of October I decided to take a month off work and spend 2 days a week volunteering at a Not For Profit. HAAG interested me because of my past association with an aged care facility as well as having aging parents.

When I contacted HAAG and met with Fiona she was professional and receptive to using my skills. Fiona made me feel I could make a worthwhile contribution to the organisation even in the short period of time I was able to volunteer. From the first day I started at the organisation the staff were welcoming and willing to help in any way they could.

Fiona asked me to help out with the membership database and mailouts >



HAAGs newest arrival



Sage Mitchell-Gordon

Welcome to the world little girl.

Your aunties and uncles at HAAG wish you a life on earth that's full of love and laughter.

Congratulations cShanny, Richie
Skye and Leah

< With Fiona's guidance and Darwin's input we came up with solution's to make the membership database more flexible and mailouts more efficient.

I really liked my time volunteering with the organisation, thank's Fiona, April and Darwin and all the staff for making me feel welcome.

AGE-FRIENDLY VICTORIA AWARDS

Housing for the Aged Action Group was very pleased to receive a Certificate of Appreciation and Recognition from Minister Martin Foley, as part of the 2016 Age-Friendly Victoria Awards.



Our Chairperson Daisy Ellery and co-manager Fiona York (above with the Governors husband and DHHS staff) were also invited to attend the Victorian Senior of the Year awards ceremony on 4th October at Government House.

Although we missed out on the Age Friendly Victoria award, it was lovely to attend and see all the recipients acknowledged for their hard work and dedication to seniors in Victoria.



Pictured here are two of our Committee members Alicia Strobbe and Sally Stabback, who can vouch for the fact that we are indeed an “age friendly” organisation.



SENIORS WEEK

As part of Seniors week in October, Housing for the Aged Action Group had an information stall at the Seniors Hub at the Melbourne Town Hall, alongside our partners Council on the Ageing. This was a great opportunity for us to give information to the public about our service, and in particular, the retirement housing service generated a lot of interest and drop ins to the office.

The stall was mainly staffed by our Committee of Management volunteers, and it was great we were able to have so many people offer to assist during the week. Pictured is Tenancy Advice worker Shane McGrath setting up the stall on the first day.

HAAG MEDIA COVERAGE

HAAG has received a lot of media interest lately, with a record number of stories airing this quarter. There has been particular interest around Retirement Housing. At the time of publication the following stories had been published or gone to air but other inquiries were still underway. Thank you to those members who have worked with the media. We really appreciate you sharing your personal journeys with the public as it is so important to show what later life housing stress and homelessness really looks like, and what needs to be done.

If you are interested in sharing your story please contact Crystal 0450 773 212

Date	Story	Media
21/10/2016	Home at Last	RADIO - SBS Filipino Language Show
22/10/2016	Age discrimination in the workforce	PRINT - The Saturday Paper
25/10/2016	Exit Fees Cut into Aged Care: HAAG	PRINT - The Courier Ballarat
26/10/2016	Fear of eviction deters many older renters from speaking out	PRINT - The Senior
26/10/2016	Coalition Housing Strategy (Older Persons Housing Strategy)	PRINT - The Senior
27/10/2016	Parliamentary Inquiry	RADIO - ABC regional Ballarat
30/10/2016	It shouldn't be so hard to get justice: Retiree Housing Disputes	PRINT - Sydney Morning Herald/The Age
1/11/2016	On the edge of homelessness	PRINT - Community Care Review
17/11/2016	Housing security for older Aussies (OPH Strategy launch)	PRINT - The Courier Ballarat
22/11/2016	Dodgy Rentals- Minimum standards	TV - A Current Affair Chanel 9
2/12/2016	Caravan Park Battle	TV - The Project Channel 10

OLDER PERSONS HOUSING STRATEGY REPORT LAUNCH

On 22 November, HAAG held its Annual General Meeting, which this year was combined with the launch of our Older Person's Housing Strategy, A Home to Age Well. The Strategy is the result of six months work with a coalition of organisations concerned about the increasing housing affordability crisis facing our ageing population. It drew upon the views expressed at the "A Home to Age Well" forum held in Melbourne on 19th April 2016, attended by 100 members of Council on the Ageing and Housing for the Aged Action Group, and calls for urgent action to address Victoria's looming housing crisis for older people.

The Strategy was launched by Commissioner for Senior Victorians Gerard Mansour and it was introduced by Joan Lansbury, a former client and member of HAAG, who graces the cover of the report. She spoke very eloquently about her experiences of being in housing stress, how it affects health and wellbeing, and how important having a service like Home at Last was for her in helping her find secure and affordable housing. Members of the coalition who worked on the strategy all spoke briefly about their work, and the importance of housing for older people. These speakers included Myfan Jordan from Council of the Ageing Victoria, Marion Lau from Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, Roger Wilson from Fair Go for Pensioners, Helen Small from Wintringham, Rachel Vanstone from Carers Victoria, and David Brant from Australian Universal Housing Design Network.

Thank you to Photographer Guruswamy Perumal for capturing the event (see page 6-7)





Honoring Lifetime Members



At the recent HAAG Annual General Meeting two long standing members were given life membership for their outstanding contribution to our organisation and the wider community.

Carmel McMennemin (pictured right) has been a member of HAAG since the late 1990's with two stints on our management committee. Carmel has also been a public housing tenant in Broadmeadows for 60 years and still participates on a number of community committees that she has supported for a very long time.

Frances Swann (pictured left) has been a HAAG member since 2003 and has barely missed a general meeting of HAAG over that time. In the past Frances has been a daily contributor as a volunteer ensuring the survival of our organisation through the difficult years when our funding was not so assured as it is today.

To Carmel and Frances we say thank you and well done! You are the life blood of Housing for the Aged Action Group and an inspiration to us all.

Long serving HAAG managers **April Bragg** and **Jeff Fiedler** (now National Project worker) received awards for their years of tireless service at HAAG. For their commitment to ensuring older Australians have safe, affordable and appropriate housing, the committee of management and all staff at HAAG say thank you.

AGEING ON THE EDGE UPDATE

HAAG's national project funded by The Wicking Trust called Ageing on The Edge – Older Persons Homelessness Prevention Project has been developing a number of areas of work that aim to:

- Improve awareness across Australia about the housing issues facing older people at risk of homelessness
- Promote the development of more housing for older people
- Encourage the development of services that can assist older people to find affordable housing
- Expand the reach of Housing for the Aged Action Group across Australia and work towards the development of linking older people together across the country

So far we have been developing connections in New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia with plans for reports, forums and submissions to government departments.



CALLING ALL COLLECTORS!

Have you collected clippings, photos or other memorabilia from HAAGs colourful history? Maybe some old campaign material?

Do you have a story you would like to tell about the past?

Please contact the office on
03 9654 7389

VOLUNTEERS CHRISTMAS LUNCH

HAAG held a special Christmas lunch for its Volunteers on Thursday 1st December. Members and staff alike had a great time and Santa even made a guest appearance!



CALD FILM LAUNCH

Housing for the Aged Action Group has launched four new short films that seek to highlight the circumstances that can lead to housing crisis, and the impact the right solution has on people's lives.

"A New Beginning: Four Stories About Finding a New Home" has been the culmination of extensive work by HAAG. The films have been converted into 10 different languages, in recognition of the culturally and linguistically diverse nature of Australia's population. The films seek to act as an information resource and conversation starter about how older people may come to experience housing issues.

On November 3rd, Placement Students Laura and Myolie attended the Serbian community film launch at the Senior Women's Group held by the Serbian Community Association of Australia.

All four stories were screened in-language. Approximately 20 people were present for the launch who all gave positive reviews. The in-language voiceover and use of film as a visual storytelling aide were particularly praised by the community members present. Each attendee also took a Home At Last in-language brochure, and they were active in asking questions about HAAG and how to get help with theirs or their friend's housing issues.

Myolie and Laura would like to extend their sincere thanks to both Marina Celebic and Biljana Trickovic for their kindness, inclusion and willingness to host the Serbian Film Launch and for their efforts in translating on the day.

SWINBURNE PROJECT

Members of the CARPAV group are collaborating with design researchers at Swinburne University of Technology, Future Self and Design Living Lab to design services that better support the needs of residents living in residential villages. The CARPAV members have taken on the role of the designer using their domain knowledge, through a process called co-creation. Co-creation involves a mixed disciplinary team working towards a shared goal, involving people who are experts in their fields.

Over a period of two months, the group will explore themes such as stakeholder relationships, existing residential parks and village services, and user experience mapping techniques to support the development of future design outcomes that support residents needs in residential parks and villages.



Images: Using craft objects and materials, the CARPAV group build abstract representations to discuss potential areas for design impact.



Caravan & Residential Park Closures

HAAG's current Retirement Housing Worker Aoife Cooke is engaging with residents of three retirement housing sites which are shutting down – two retirement villages and one caravan park. The threat of homelessness is very difficult for older people. It is an even bigger shock where residents were expecting to stay in their homes for the rest of their days.

Grace Court is a small not-for-profit retirement village in Kew. There are mostly older residents, as well as a few residents with some health needs who are younger, but have enjoyed the support of village living. Recently, all residents were told that they had just over a year to find new homes, and the village hired a support organisation to help re-house residents. Some residents are interested in working with HAAG to learn about their rights from an external and impartial group.

HAAG has been working with residents of Mayflower in Preston since early in the year. The organisation and a number of different support organisations have been working together to re-house residents, and to ensure the process is as fair as possible. HAAG co-manager April Bragg is responsible for re-housing a number of residents, while HAAG Retirement Housing Workers Shanny Gordon and Aoife Cooke have been advocating on behalf of residents on a variety of issues. While some residents are now happy in their new homes, others have many more months of worry and uncertainty ahead.

The Central City Caravan Park in Bendigo is home to 90 residents, and around 80% of these are older people. In mid-November, the park announced it was due to close. While the business operators were due to sell to a new owner, the land owner no longer wishes to lease the land for use by a caravan park. HAAG is supporting residents to ensure their concerns are heard as support and plans are made for their futures.

We have also been in touch with people concerning the closures of BP Caravan Park in Werribee, and Wantirna Caravan Park. Fear of homelessness and uncertainty around the future impacts negatively on older residents' health, happiness and the enjoyment of later years. HAAG advocates at government level for security of tenure for all residents of retirement housing.

INQUIRY INTO RETIREMENT HOUSING

The parliamentary inquiry into retirement housing entered its second phase on 28 September 2016 holding the first day of public hearings at which HAAG was invited to speak. Shanny Gordon, HAAG's retirement housing worker, made a presentation to the parliamentary committee and a number of HAAG's members attended on the day to listen to the scheduled speakers. A transcript of the HAAG presentation is available on the HAAG website.

The second phase was completed on 26 November 2016 with the last of the public hearings being held. Some HAAG members were invited to speak at the public hearings and some also made comments when the forum was open for comment at the end of each day, even travelling to rural areas and attending after hours sessions. As a result of some of these comments, an extra session was scheduled just to hear from some of HAAG members concerns.

We hope that this mammoth effort made by HAAG and its members results in some meaningful decisions being made on 1 March 2017 when the parliamentary committee is due to release its recommendations.

.Shanny is now on maternity leave while Aoife Cooke fills in as retirement housing worker. We wish Shanny all the best with her new baby and will see her back soon.



Lesley Menzies (RRVV), Lawrie Robertson (RRVV), Barney De Wit, Vicki Gutsjahr, Heilala Courtice, Kathy Barnes, Shanny Gordon



Joane McKnight, Daisy Ellery, Wyn Stenton, John McKechnie, Barney De Wit, Sally Stabback, Max Penaluna, Kathy Barnes, Shanny Gordon, Helen Vallack

ILU AND CARPAV WORKING GROUPS

Both the ILU and CARPAV working groups worked very hard this year on the many opportunities that presented themselves in relation to policy and law reform and review.

Both groups worked comprehensively on the RTA review and the parliamentary inquiry.

Members lobbied their local Members of Parliament (MPs) which was the catalyst that prompted the motion for a parliamentary inquiry into retirement housing being passed. Many members also submitted their own individual submissions to the inquiry and some were even invited to speak at the hearings.

Members also lobbied their MPs around the RTA review keeping them up to date with HAAG's key priorities for reform.

Members continued to attend monthly meetings and were focused on achieving as much success as possible during this policy rich time of review.

HAAG wants to thank the working group members for their dedication and passion. Without your hard work and effort we would not have achieved as much as we have this year. Thank you!

CAMPAIGNS & POLICY WORKING GROUP

The Campaigns and Policy Working Group has been focusing on the HAAG Manifesto and Charter – documents that set out our vision of the basic rights of older people with respect to housing. Neither had been updated in a number of years and bringing them into line with contemporary standards and expectations has involved a lot of tough questions and hard work.

Once the update is finished, we expect to use these documents to challenge government and other housing providers to ensure what they offer to older people meets basic benchmarks of security, affordability, accessibility, and so forth.

VCAT Avoided

This was an unusually successful period for negotiations with landlords and agents, with many matters resolved without having to go to VCAT. Whether out of compassion or, more often, because they realised they couldn't win, a number of agents agreed not to pursue. Tribunal hearings (mostly around eviction, but also one large compensation claim and a range of minor matters). This is especially gratifying because, for many older tenants, just going to the Tribunal is incredibly stressful. Saving people from that stress can be almost as useful and important as saving them from homelessness.

I'm not sure if my negotiation skills are improving or I've just been on a lucky streak, but either way the tenants I worked with were very happy with the results.

-Shane McGrath, Tenancy worker

CASE WORK SUMMARIES

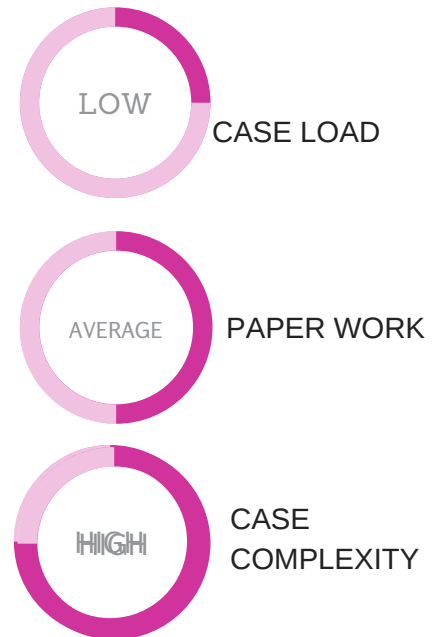
RETIREMENT HOUSING ADVICE SUMMARY

Greatest Success

Challenging overcharging for electricity for a group of residents of a caravan park

Greatest Challenge

Working with a large number of residents of a caravan park which is shutting down.



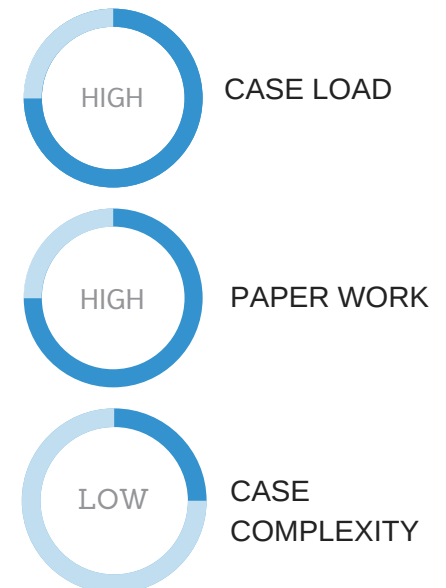
HOUSING SUPPORT SUMMARY

Greatest Success

Receiving several property offers from social housing providers, which means that a number of clients with high-requirements will be settled into their new homes by Christmas.

Greatest Challenge

Changes to the priority segment system impacting waiting times for property offers, and shifting some clients from second priority to fifth.



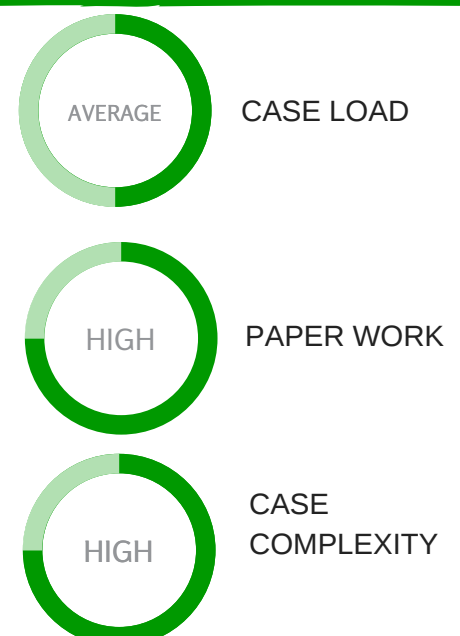
TENANCY ADVICE SUMMARY

Greatest Success

Lots of success negotiating outcomes with agents and landlords, without having to go to VCAT, meaning much less stress for tenants.

Greatest Challenge

Pretending to be nice to obnoxious real estate agents so they'll keep doing good things for my clients.



Communications

Communications worker Crystal McDonald would like to thank Tegan Leeder and Darwin Cheng for filling in as group facilitators in her Mat. Leave absence, as well as all the group members for their continued contributions. Crystal returned to work in November, and meetings will recommence on **2nd February 2017**.

OCT-DEC was a quarter of publicity. HAAG has been contacted by various media outlets for comment on several issue (see page 5). The largest of which is the park closures (page 11) and the residents caught up in them. The residential tenancies act and the quality of private rentals has also been of interest.

HAAG work to remain at the forefront of these issues by responding promptly to media inquiries, sending media releases and sharing relevant news on social media.

After 30 years of experience in the field it is no wonder HAAG are being sought out to give professional opinion on these issues.

This publicity puts the issues faced by older renters in front of voters and policy makers, educating them on the social and economical importance of implementing solutions, particularly an Older Persons Housing Strategy (see page5).

HAAG SERVICE DATA 01 SEP - 30 NOV 2016

Total new Clients	268
Needing Housing support	206 (77%)
Needing Information Only	62 (23%)
Main reason for seeking assistance (top 3)	
Inappropriate/Inad. Housing	95 (35%)
Housing Crisis eg: NTV	77 (29%)
Housing Affordability Stress	61 (23%)
Client Demographics	
Average Age	66
Predominate Gender	Female (66%)
Referrals to Housing Support/Information	
HAAG Services	117
External Services	180
HAAG Housing Outcomes	
Clients Housed	25
Offers made	33
Average time to Rehouse	3-6 months
Tenancy Service data	
Tenancy Clients	33
Top issue (19%)	NTV 60days
VCAT representations (see page 13)	2
Retirement Info Service data^	
Retirement Info Clients	62
Average Age	70-79
Predominate Gender	female
Residents at Info. sessions	40
Secondary Consultations*	
Total	18
Total hours spent on SC	5
Consult. requested by other agency	44%
*Cannot be counted as clients due to eligibility etc.	
^Retirement Info data 01Oct-10 Dec2016	

Want to stay connected? Follow us on social media:



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ActionGroup/**



twitter.com/HAAGHomeAtLast

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WISHING YOU
& your family

* A VERY HAPPY HOLIDAY *

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Fighting for Housing justice
for Older people since 1983

**HAAG also offers FREE confidential advice and
support to over 55's**

Housing Options Information

Outreach care and housing support

Private renters assistance and tenancy advice

Retirement housing advice and support