



older
tenants
voice



HON. Marlene Kairouz

Aoife Cooke

Daisy Ellery

SEPTEMBER 2016 | SPRING EDITION

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP - 03 9654 7389

CHAIRPERSONS WELCOME



On behalf of the Committee of Management (COM), I would like to welcome our new staff member Chloe Beaton who has commenced working with us as our Part Time Financial Officer. I am also delighted to welcome to the team, Suresh Pillai from Forrest Hill Partners, who is providing pro-bono accounting and business assistance to HAAG.

The COM welcomes to the team our two new students, Laura and Myolie. I hope you enjoy your placement with HAAG. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Crystal and Gemma on the safe arrival of their beautiful baby girls, Allira and Mia. We are really excited for you both and we hope that motherhood is filled with much joy and happiness.

Thank to Alicia Strobbe and Sally Stabback, two of our committee members who have taken on the role of Housekeeping Portfolio. Your work is very much appreciated, well done!

Our committee members, Gordon Beard and Bob Brooks are recovering well after their operations and will soon be back on board.

In view of both the Federal and State Government's plans to move away from direct government provision of public housing toward a private/public social and community partnership, we must make sure that there are regulations in place to monitor the transfer of public housing stock, in recognition of the critical health impact insecure housing has on older people. Therefore, there needs to be dedicated strategies to address the massive housing needs of older people that will emerge in an ever increasing ageing population. It is imperative for secure, affordable housing to be guaranteed.

The COM maintains solid principles on affordable housing in the interests of older people and the best way we can influence change after being involved as a sole organisation fighting transfers since the 1990's. We will continue to be a strong voice for all older people and ensure specialist housing assistance for older peoples' needs is made more available across Victoria and Australia. Therefore, we will continue to work hard for the rights of older people to achieve housing justice and secure affordable accommodation. HAAG will work with all levels of government in achieving the best outcomes for how housing services are funded and delivered.

The COM is inspired everyday by how firmly and fundamentally compassion is woven into the fabric of the culture amongst our wonderful staff and Management.

Till next time
Enjoy the spring weather

Daisy

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: SALLY STABBACK



I came to HAAG to join the Independent Living Unit's (ILU) working group about 5 years ago after retiring from a 45 years nursing career in the city. I live in a not-for-profit ILU in Kyneton.

I did some volunteering in my area including the conservation and restoration of the Newham Mechanics Institute and joined Council on The Ageing (COTA) policy council who I represent on a group about the care of older people in acute public hospitals.

Since joining HAAG I have been elected to the Management Committee for the last 4 years and belong to the governance, finance and housekeeping sub-committees all of which I find interesting and challenging and help to keep my brain ticking over apart from meeting terrific people and making new friendships. I have been to rallies and sat on stalls and generally had a pretty good time. I find volunteering here productive and satisfying and I have a real sense of achievement and they do pretty good food!!!

At home I keep the garden in order in my village, make preserves for charity, read an enormous amount and listen to music and love opera and ballet.

Come along and join us as a volunteer – it's terrific- I just love it.

WELCOME CHLOE!



Hi, my name is Chloe and I am very excited to fill the role of finance officer for HAAG. I have previously worked in the housing sector in transitional housing and found that the organisations I worked with did not encourage, or allow me, to advocate for the tenants, with whom I served. Thus after a few too many head aches and confrontations with management I decided to try to take another path in supporting the community sector. So in my mid-thirties I decided to study accounting and I finished my degree in June last year.

I am keen to use the knowledge and skill I have now obtained for the members of HAAG, and provide excellent, concise and relevant financial records and information for the management committee ensuring that HAAG is a strong and robust organisation ready to tackle anything. I believe strongly that Housing is a Human Right and together with HAAG, look forward in assisting people to ensure they have secure and appropriate housing.

Further to my housing work I have worked in East Timor and London. I love to read, swim and play backgammon. I also foster children and subscribe and volunteer at 3CR.

WELCOME STUDENTS LAURA AND MYOLIE



Hi! I'm Laura, and I'm currently completing my Master of Social Work. I've been fortunate to gain a placement at HAAG, undertaking a project in Community Education. The aim is to help spread awareness about HAAG and Home at Last throughout key Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities within Victoria. I'm looking forward to my time at HAAG, and am excited about this fantastic learning opportunity!

Hi everyone, allow me to introduce myself as the new social work student from RMIT University. I am Myolie Nguyen and currently undertaking my first placement of my Bachelor of Social Work/ Social Science degree. I am so excited to have my first placement at HAAG where I can experience working with elder people and also organisational working environment.

During my placement, I work mainly on intake services and outreach housing support in which I will be able to learn more about housing system and aged cared services. More than that, being together with my supervisor Melis, I am able to help clients with housing applications and moving and also make referrals to suitable local aged care and health services. At here, I am able to apply social work and psychodynamic theories into practices as well as improve my knowledge about homelessness and elder people.

Much appreciated for this wonderful opportunity. I am excited and looking forward for my time at HAAG.

Welcome To The World! Allira & Mia



Allira

Congratulation Crystal and Gemma! Wishing you all the best in this exciting new stage of your lives with your new baby.



Mia

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS!

Housing for the Aged Action Group is helping Adelaide University with some important research.

Do you live in rental accommodation and receive a home care package?

Would you help us identify ways that landlords and aged care service providers can better meet your needs?

We are seeking people who

- **Are aged 60 years or over**
- **Rent their home**
- **Receive a Commonwealth Home Care Package**
- **Are willing to take part in a group discussion about how your housing and aged care service needs are being met**

The group discussion will be held at Housing for the Aged Action Group, Level 1 247-251 Flinders Lane Melbourne on **12 October 2016 at 10.00am**. Morning tea will be provided and participants will receive \$10 for travel reimbursement.

If you or someone you know meets the criteria and would like to be part of this important research, please RSVP by 7 October 2016 to Fiona York Fiona.york@oldertenants.org.au or call 96547389.

For more information about the research, call Victoria Cornell from Adelaide University on (08) 83181282 or email victoria.cornell@adelaide.edu.au



LISTEN

RADIO 3CR

855AM

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

SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING- 17 NOVEMBER 2016

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on 17th November 2016 at 11.00am – 1.00pm. Elections for office bearers will take place at this meeting. All members are eligible to nominate and vote.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

After nine months of consultation, the three year strategic plan for Housing for the Aged Action Group has been finalised and approved by the Committee of Management. This will guide the work of the organisation for the next three years.

Highlights from the plan include encouraging more members to join working groups, and supporting members to lobby their politicians about housing for older people. We would also like to increase the number of members from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to reflect our client group, and from regional areas. Our hope is that we will expand and improve our support for members and volunteers over the next three years. The strategic plan also includes plans for increasing our public profile, and continuing to provide a quality service to older people at risk of homelessness.

Parliamentary inquiry into retirement housing – UPDATE

The parliamentary inquiry into retirement housing, being conducted by the Legal and Social Issues Committee of the Victorian Legislative Council, has completed its first phase which requested submissions from the public around a range of issues related to retirement housing.

Submissions have been posted on the inquiry website and can be found here:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lisic/article/2970>

HAAG's submission can be found here:

<http://www.oldertenants.org.au/publications/haag-submission-inquiry-retirement-housing>

HAAG was also involved in a joint submission with Consumer Action Law Centre, Council on the Ageing, Justice Connect and Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria which can be found here:

<http://www.oldertenants.org.au/publications/joint-submission-parliamentary-inquiry-retirement-housing-sector>

Thank you to the HAAG members that responded with individual submissions. The inquiry has received approximately 800 submissions which is a phenomenal response.

The next phase of the review will involve the committee holding public hearings where they can interact directly with organisations and individuals who submitted responses to find out more about the key issues and recommendations to consider in their final report.

The schedule of hearings can be found here:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lisic/article/2971>

The final report must be produced by the committee by 1 March 2017.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES ACT (RTA) REVIEW - UPDATE

The second phase of the RTA review, driven by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), has come to a close. The second phase of the review involved the release, and subsequent response to, 6 issues papers:

- Security of tenure,
- Rent, bonds and other charges,
- Rights and responsibilities,
- Dispute resolution,
- Property standards and conditions, and;
- Alternative forms of tenure

HAAG responded to all 6 issues papers and submissions can be found here:
<http://www.older tenants.org.au/haag/publications>

For the next phase of the review CAV will release an options paper which will propose possibilities for change and this paper will be open for public response. The paper is due to be released towards the end of 2016.

In the lead up to the release of the options paper HAAG is also involved in an Residential Tenancies Act reference group initiated by Consumer Affairs Victoria.

The RTA review website can be found here:
<http://fairersaferhousing.vic.gov.au/renting>

Thank you to all HAAG members who contributed to HAAG's submissions.

LAUNCH SITES

Three sites across Victoria have been chosen to launch “a new way of working” across the housing and homelessness systems in partnership with local community organisations. The three areas are Inner Gippsland, Brimbank-Melton and Hume-Moreland.

This is happening because the current system is fragmented, disconnected and can't keep up with demand, making it hard for people to get the help they need. The reform is in line with the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Housing for the Aged Action Group is participating in the Brimbank-Melton launch site reform.

The government is asking us to :

- Contribute and provide expert advice
- Lead and implement changes in our organisation including working with our local DHHS office and other stakeholders
- Provide regular feedback and reporting

Recently, Launch Site Facilitators were employed by DHHS to lead the process, and we are expecting to be part of an area implementation group soon. We can only hope that this reform will lead to a better experience for older people who access the homelessness and housing services.

HOMELESSNESS WEEK 2016: RALLY AND REPORT RELEASED

On 1 August, Housing for the Aged Action Group members and staff braved the weather to rally in the city for Homelessness Week. The rally drew attention to the “Hidden homeless” – older women living in private rental. We handed out around 100 copies of our “Older People & Housing” fact sheets and marched from Fed Square up Swanston St to the Town Hall with our placards and new megaphone. Chairperson Daisy Ellery made a speech. It was a great effort from our members, despite the wet and cold weather.

We released a report on the day – *At the Crossroads: Older people at risk of homelessness*. This contained data on the first two years of our service, which has seen over 2000 people, 60% of them older women, and over half in expensive private rental. A quarter of people contacting the service have already been evicted, and are couch surfing, house sitting or living with friends or family.

The report garnered lots of attention, and resulted in interviews with RN Breakfast and News Radio which was heard all over Australia, and an article in The Senior in September. People who heard the story on radio then got in contact with Home at Last, which has led to more media and other opportunities. HAAG were invited to attend a meeting in Canberra with Equality Rights Alliance, a national network of 61 organisations, to discuss older women and housing. We have also been contacted by groups, including universities, from Tasmania, NSW and WA requesting the report.

The rally and report also received lots of social media attention. The photograph of our committee member Sally Stabback was very popular indeed, and was seen over 7000 times on Twitter! The report and more photographs from the rally can be seen on our website.



GENERAL EXEMPTION ORDER (GEO) REVIEW

The GEO provides exemption categories in relation to entities that provide electricity to a defined group of customers and/or as an incidental to their main business. This means certain entities are not required to apply for a license to sell and supply electricity and they are exempt from certain aspects of regulation. It also means the services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria (EWOV) are not available to customers of exempt suppliers.

Embedded electrical networks provided in caravan and residential parks (and also often in retirement villages) are covered by the GEO. Therefore the rights and protections of residents, as the third party to an energy arrangement, are not clear or robust.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) launched a review of the GEO in 2015 requesting submissions as to what amendments were required in this area to improve consumer protections.

HAAG submitted a response focusing on exemptions granted to caravan and residential park owners and operators supplying and on-selling electricity through an embedded network, and the consequent impact on long term tenants and residents

This year DELWP released a draft position paper proposing recommendations for changes to the GEO. HAAG submitted a response and was mostly in support of the recommendations outlined in the paper. HAAG's response can be found here: <http://www.older tenants.org.au/publications/haag-submission-general-exemption-order-position-paper>

HAAG was also invited by the Minister for Energy – Lily D'Ambrosio – to participate in a media event to publicise the release of the paper.

Below Joane McKnight, a member of HAAG's committee of management, is seen with Minister D'Ambrosio.



We take this opportunity to announce and gratefully acknowledge recent grants HAAG has received from two Philanthropic Trusts. We have received \$9,000 from The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation – Youth in Philanthropy Program, and \$5,000 from Street Smart Australia.

The funding will be used to assist our Home at Last outreach clients move into long term housing. Grants we receive are used in a very practical way that enables people to establish and maintain their new housing. Some of the things grants pay for are rent in advance, removal costs, packing, and where necessary the purchase of beds, white goods and household items. On average our service successfully houses 10 people per month and without this type of financial assistance all would remain either homeless, or would remain living in dire housing circumstances. Thank you to both Trusts for your generous donations and for supporting both our work and clients.

A New Beginning: Four Stories About Finding a New Home

- Film Launch

Produced by Bentwheel productions and HAAG, as part of our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community education, this film collection seeks to highlight the circumstances that can lead to housing crisis and the impact the right solution has on people's lives.



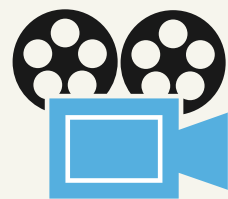
When: Tuesday, 18th October 10:30am
(HAAG General Meeting – all welcome)

Where: The Hayden Raysmith Room
Level 4 Ross House
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

RSVP for catering by Monday, 10th October
Home at Last Office: 9654 7389, or Laura:
student@oldertenants.org.au



Go to: www.oldertenants.org.au for Campaign updates



FILM LAUNCH

As part of HAAG general meeting, HAAG is going to launch new HAL film- 'A new beginning: Four stories about finding a new home' at 10:30am, 18 Oct 2016 in the Hayden Raysmith room. All are welcome to attend.

A HOME FOR DIVERSITY

'A Home for Diversity' was a 6 month project that aimed increase the capacity of homelessness services to work with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. The project provides training to housing workers, particularly those who work with older people. This training was provided by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, in collaboration with Housing for the Aged Action Group and ran from July to August 2016.

In the process of gathering information to inform the contents of the training package, a number of stakeholders were consulted. These were, a Community Reference Group, a Housing and Homelessness Sector Reference Group, interviews with 5 services users and a survey of Housing and Homelessness workers with 89 responses.

A report has been created in response to the valuable and comprehensive information provided by these stakeholders, particularly on the ability of the Housing and Homelessness sector to respond to the needs of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.

The project undertook to engage stakeholders in housing and homelessness sector and the ethno-specific service sector, in order to create and deliver a training program that will increase the capacity of housing and homelessness workers to work with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Through its partnership with HAAG, the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH) have delivered 6 tailored training sessions as part of the project. The outcomes of these sessions will be measured by CEH into the future, but feedback so far has indicated that participants have found the training useful and practical and many stated their intention to change their individual practice and/or procedures in their agencies.

Without knowledge and understanding of the diverse migration histories and cultural values and practices of Australia's multicultural communities, services will not be culturally inclusive and responsive to the complex needs of clients from culturally diverse backgrounds. HAAG believes that this project has gone some way in providing a foundation for structural changes to how services are delivered, so that clients from culturally diverse backgrounds can have more equitable access to housing and homelessness services.

Housing for the Action Group was keen for the important learnings from the project to be shared with other housing services, so that access to housing services for older CALD people could be improved. We hope this information has been valuable for both service providers and relevant government and funding bodies.

INDEPENDENT VOICES: COLLECTING AND RECORDING THE EXPERIENCES OF RESIDENTS OF NOT-FOR-PROFIT RETIREMENT VILLAGES

I had the enviable job of travelling to suburbs, regional towns and rural villages in Victoria to meet with older people living in not-for-profit Independent Living Units (ILUs). But people were hesitant to get in touch with me. When I was inviting people to interview, many expressed fear that speaking out could compromise their relationships with management or their security of tenure. This fear tells us something is wrong with residents' experiences of the atmosphere or culture of their ILU clusters and villages.

We needed to find out more. Housing provision for older people must have the wellbeing of older people at its core. This project was instigated in the recognition that older people deserve dignity and quality of life in their housing, and to live free of fear.

In the final report, residents' views and experiences are written up and I have drawn recommendations for improving ILUs from this learning. There are five thematic areas: residents views of ILUs and the retirement housing sector; what contributes to a good quality of life; legal issues which have arisen for residents, and governance. The research also explores some issues around the current state of the housing stock.

You can download a copy of the report on our website

www.older tenants.org.au/haag/publications, or phone us on 03 96547389 and we will send you a copy.

The Launch of 'Independent Voices'

HAAG hosted the launch of our new report on the 26th July at the Multicultural Hub on Elizabeth St in the city.

HAAG's Chair Daisy Ellery opened the event by welcoming everyone. She explained that the project had come about as low-income residents of ILUs were approaching the organisation with stories of exploitation and mistreatment. HAAG's retirement housing Officer Shanny Gordon and HAAG's Independent Living Unit Working Group wanted to see if their experiences were shared by other ILU residents across Victoria.

Daisy thanked the many people who contributed to the project, the author Aoife Cooke, Shanny Gordon and the members of the ILU Working Group; Loc Tran, Akeeb Abao, Kirsten Day, Naseem Ahmadpour and Alen Kiernan of the Centre for Design Innovation at Swinburne University. Thank you also to Denise Boyd of the Consumer Action Law Centre. Aoife Cooke then spoke, and outlined some findings from the report, which are also included in this newsletter. She was followed by the Hon. Marlene Kairouz, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. We are grateful to the Minister for joining us and addressing our gathering for the event.

The next speaker was Kerry Jones from the funders for this project, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. She is the Program Manager for Homelessness & Affordable Housing, and spoke of their support for HAAGs work, and the importance of older people's housing.

Our final three speakers were Barney de Wit, Kathy Barnes and Vicki Gutsjahr, members of the Independent Living Unit Working Group. They presented case studies from the report – stories of the difficulties that residents of ILUs are encountering. These stories, like many of the case studies and quotes in the report, show us the human impact of weak regulation, bad management practices and the strain of unaffordable housing. Thankfully, the report also highlights the positive aspects of life in an ILU.

We closed the launch with presentations of chocolates to the speakers and a beautiful bunch of flowers to Aoife to say thank you for all her hard work. We then enjoyed tea, cakes and conversation – something HAAG always does excellently!



CASE WORK SUMMARIES

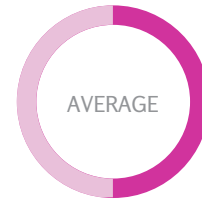
RETIREMENT HOUSING ADVICE SUMMARY

Greatest Success

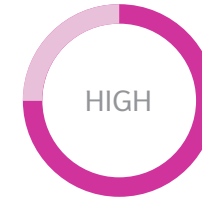
Good success with VCAT and negotiations this period.

Greatest Challenge

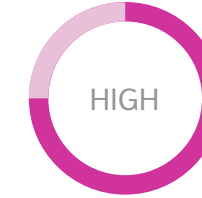
The complexity of the matters that come through the service, and the continued juggling of policy and casework..



CASE LOAD



PAPER WORK



CASE COMPLEXITY

HOUSING SUPPORT SUMMARY

Greatest Success

Proud to report during the quarter we received 51 long term property offers and housed 35 people during the period.

Greatest Challenge

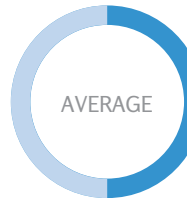
Co-ordinating our resources to ensure we don't have a waiting list for intake and outreach response.



CASE LOAD



PAPER WORK



CASE COMPLEXITY

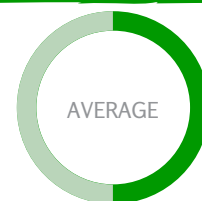
TENANCY ADVICE SUMMARY

Greatest Success

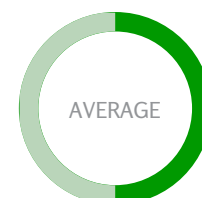
Finally concluded a very complex and long-running case involving rental fraud on the part of a landlord with a big success at VCAT

Greatest Challenge

Balancing casework against policy advocacy.



CASE LOAD



PAPER WORK



CASE COMPLEXITY

Communications

First of all, I would like to congratulate Crystal again on the safe arrival of the beautiful Allira on the behalf of the Communication Working Group's Members.

The Communication Working Group are now co-facilitated by Darwin and Tegan until the new year. In the last Communication Working Group, we reviewed the pilot project to follow up on new members which was undertaken by HAAG members Gerri and Kris. Gerri made a comprehensive report about the project and it was agreed that the project would be continued. We decided that new members would now be called by HAAG's volunteers weeks before the general meeting/ important event to welcome them for joining us, as well as encourage them to attend our meeting and event.

We also discussed and agreed to develop a mechanism to track HAAG's brochure distribution.

Darwin would also like to remind all members to renew their membership with HAAG. If you have already done it, that's great. Even greater if you can remind your friend if they have yet to do it.

Want to stay connected? Follow us on social media:



facebook.com/HousingfortheAgeActionGroup/



twitter.com/HAAGHomeAtLast

HAAG SERVICE DATA 01/06/16-31/08/16

Total new clients	293
Needing housing support	207
Needing information only	86

Main reason for seeking assistance (top 3)

Inappropriate/Inadequate Housing	96
Housing Crisis eg: NTV	84
Housing Affordability Stress	52

Client Demographics

Predominate Age Range	66-85
Predominate Gender	Female

Referrals to Housing Support/Information

HAAG Services	119
External Services	86

HAAG Housing Outcomes

Clients housed	35
Offers made	51
Average time to rehouse	1-3 months

Tenancy Service data

Tenancy Clients	32
Top issue	Notice to Vacate
VCAT representations	5

Retirement Info Service data

Retirement Info Clients	98
Average Age	70-79
Predominate Gender	Female
Resident at Info. Sessions	160

Secondary Consultations*

Total	18
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*Cannot be counted as clients due to eligibility etc. |

Housing for the Aged Action Group Inc.

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Melbourne 3000.

ADMIN: 9654 7389

Home At Last: 1300 765 178

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