



Out of the Closet, Out of Options:

Policy Snapshot and Key Findings

Housing for the Aged Action
Group, October 2020

About this snapshot

This document provides a brief overview, and presents the key findings of the full report:

[Out of the Closet, Out of Options: Older LGBTI People at Risk of Homelessness](#)

by Rebecca Walton and Fiona York, *Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG)*,
October 2020

[The LGBTI Elders Housing Project](#)

The reports have been developed in coordination with the LGBTI Elders Housing Project Steering Group which is made up of

Tonye Segbedzi (Australian Association of Gerontology),
Pauline Cramer (Val's LGBTI ageing and aged care),
Brenda Appleton (Transgender Victoria),
Ada Castle (Switchboard Victoria)
Toby Bolton (Thorne Harbour Health)
Fiona York (HAAG),
Rebecca Walton (HAAG),
With special thanks to Joe Ball and Meredith Butler (Switchboard)

[Watch the Project Video!](#)





Overview

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) is a Victorian community-based organisation specialising in the housing needs of older people. HAAG has an early intervention and prevention approach to homelessness, which involves providing community and professional education to alert people to what places older people at risk of homelessness and pathways to support.

In order to better understand and address the unique housing experiences of LGBTI older people, HAAG undertook research to explore the current housing circumstances and concerns of LGBTI older people. This area has been overlooked in national statistics as well as research and policy in both the ageing and housing sectors.

Between Jan 2019-Jan 2020, we surveyed a total of 228 people. Of these, 68 were conducted face-to-face during Midsumma carnival in 2019, with the remaining 160 completed over the phone (10), face-to-face (3) and online (147). In addition, we have conducted 13 in-depth interviews with older LGBTI people from various housing backgrounds including public and social housing tenants, couch surfers, homeowners, renters and those in 'other' housing situations. This has provided a deeper insight into the current housing circumstances for older LGBTI people.

The research and our community engagement strategy has been supported by a steering group consisting of organisations who work with older LGBTI people. The steering group has been meeting regularly over the last 18 months and remain committed to working together to address the issues identified in this research. Their input and advice has been invaluable.

Key findings

There are significant research gaps in the experiences of older LGBTI Australians and housing.

More older LGBTI people have experienced homelessness than their non-LGBTI counterparts

Older LGBTI people are in circumstances that place them at risk of homelessness, including:

- Lower numbers own their own homes outright, and significant numbers are in private rental, even at retirement age
- High numbers living in “informal” housing arrangements such as share housing, living with ex-partners or renting from friends
- Significant numbers of older LGBTI people live with disabilities and are in caring roles
- LGBTI elders are 7 times more likely to live alone than the general older population

Although older LGBTI people are at a greater risk of homelessness, they do not recognise that they are at risk and 60% of LGBTI older people do not know where to go for help and information about their housing options

There are a lack of affordable housing options for older LGBTI people, a lack of LGBTI friendly homelessness services and a lack of appropriate community education about housing options to prevent older LGBTI people becoming homeless.

“ I can only just afford to pay rent, but struggle to buy food when faced with other bills to pay ”

Jordan, Transgender, 60 years old lives alone in a private rental

“ I am terrified of becoming homeless in the future, given lack of... affordable housing. I have no family or friends to ask for support ”

John, gay man, 55 years old living in private rental.

“ If my relationship breaks down, it would become a worse situation financially. I Wouldn't be able to afford a home and might need to rent....More pressure to stay in relationship ”

Mary, Lesbian, 62 years old, home owner with mortgage

Recommendations

The following recommendations are endorsed by the members of our project steering committee – Housing for the Aged Action Group, Val’s Ageing and Aged Care, Transgender Victoria, Switchboard, Thorne Harbour Health and the Australian Association of Gerontology.

- Develop more appropriate housing options for older LGBTI people
- Provide specialist housing and homelessness support services for older LGBTI people
- Provide LGBTI inclusivity and awareness training to housing and homelessness sector workers who provide services to older people
- Improve the collection of housing and homelessness data about older LGBTI people
- Fund LGBTI ageing research about housing and homelessness for under-represented groups, particularly people with intersex variations, trans and gender diverse people, bisexuals, those with disability, and LGBTI CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Full Report

This snapshot report is an abridged version of the full report [“Out of the Closet, Out of Options: Older LGBTI people at risk of homelessness”](#) by Rebecca Walton and Fiona York. For more detailed information, survey results, and discussion of the issue [read the full report here](#).



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