



older  
tenants  
voice



DECEMBER 2015 | SUMMER EDITION

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP - 03 9654 7389

# CHAIRPERSONS WELCOME

Farewell Vicki - Thank you for your service as Chairperson 2014-2015.

It is with sadness that I announce my resignation from the position of chairperson of HAAG. I am however, remaining on the committee. I have had an amazing year and it has been wonderful working with such dedicated staff and committee members. Thank you all very much. I'd like to wish you all the very best for the holiday season and for 2016. It is going to be another great year for HAAG.



*Vicki*

## Welcome to the Chair Daisy Ellery

What would Molly Hadfield a founding member of HAAG have us do today? She would urge us to engage, turn up. She would remind us 'never stop' and 'never give in', to continue to advocate the fundamental importance of the human right to adequate housing and home. To continue to campaign and lobby on issues of housing affordability and the future of services for older people at risk of homelessness, to make sure the housing slums that proliferated during the 1930's never happen again.



I am honoured to be named Chairperson of HAAG and am dedicated to these actions propounded by Molly to ensure older people obtain housing security. It is an exciting time for HAAG and I am thrilled to be a part of it!

*Daisy*

COVER PHOTO: COLLEEN HARTLAND, ELLEN SANDELL AND HAAG MEMBER DAISY ELLERY AT PARLIAMENTARY EVENT. SEE PAGE 9.

# Vale Siva and Elisabeth

In the last couple of months we were saddened to hear that two very special HAAG members passed away.

Sivarasa Nallararatnam passed away on the 2nd November 2015. Siva had been a long term member of HAAG's Committee of Management who was also a central advocate for the Sri Lankan community in Melbourne.

Siva was a Justice of the Peace; President of the Victorian Tamil Senior Citizens Benevolent Society and served twice as President of the Victorian Tamil Senior Citizens Committee. He was an active member of the Interfaith Network, where he worked tirelessly to bring together ethnic groups and faith based groups. He was also a member of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, a member of the South-Eastern Radio Association and a member of the Victorian Public Transport Union.

Siva was a kind and caring man who cared deeply for his community and spread his influence far and wide in the spirit of co-operation, tolerance and the rights of people on low incomes.



Siva with April Bragg at HAAG Christmas Party 2013

Long term member of HAAG and activist Elisabeth Coldicutt passed away on Wednesday 30th September at the age of 91. Elisabeth had not been in contact with HAAG for the past few years but had been actively involved for many years before then. At a very practical level Elisabeth was involved with the development of HAAG's photographic archives and these documents are now collected securely for the future use and reflection of the organisation. At all major events and meetings Elisabeth would present enlargements of the photos as displays and always focused on the actions of the group.

More broadly Elisabeth believed passionately in the value of public housing and on many occasions publicly campaigned for more public housing and against privatisation. This included Elisabeth's involvement in a forum HAAG held in 2004 called Back to the Future where she presented two films made by her husband in 1946 about housing poverty in Melbourne. The attached transcript was the speech she gave at the forum.



Elisabeth Coldicutt introducing the 1947 silent film "Beautiful Melbourne" at HAAG's forum Back to the Future, 25 May 2004

## Welcome Students Ken Ko and Darwin Cheng



Hi, my name is Darwin. I am a social work student from RMIT University and currently doing my second placement with HAAG until March 2016. During my placement, I will be mainly work on the HAAG's film project. I am looking forward for my new journey with HAAG and hope that at the end of my placement I have gained enough skills and confidence to become a qualified social worker!

Hi all, my name is Ken and I am undertaking a Bachelor of Social Work degree at RMIT University. As a part of my degree, I am required to complete a student placement within a welfare organisation. This will give me a valuable opportunity to put into practice everything I have learnt during my time at University.

I am very fortunate to have been allocated to a placement at HAAG, and I will be working under the close supervision of Gemma and Maria as part of the CALD media/ communications project. I would like to thank all the staff at HAAG for this wonderful opportunity, and for their very warm welcome!

WATCH

LISTEN

READ

RADIO 3CR:

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

We love sharing our members stories.  
Have something to say on radio?  
Contact Shane on 9654 7389

# Preventing homelessness in older culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities

The preventing Homelessness in Older CALD Communities project, a collaboration between Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and Housing for the Aged Action Group is unfortunately coming to an end.

The project has developed a new and effective approach to delivering information about housing options and housing support to high need culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This has included creating and publishing, not just language-appropriate, but also culturally appropriate brochures and community education materials.

In partnership with the ECCV and the project's bi-lingual workers, Home at Last coordinated the delivery of a community education campaign across the Greater Melbourne area to raise awareness of affordable, secure housing options for older people. The project's 16 dedicated bi-lingual workers have so far delivered 64 information sessions in 9 different languages.

217 clients from the project's target groups- groups who were previously underutilising the Home at Last service have been assisted in the past year. 27 clients from the project's target groups have been housed in long term affordable housing, and many others have been assisted by other housing services, through Home at Last referrals.

A final report will be made available to HAAG members from the 4th of December. The report makes recommendations based on a process of community consultation, from Home at Last clients and Home at Last service data. The recommendations are designed to assist decision makers in planning inclusive services and encourage the development of housing policies that ensure equitable access for older CALD communities.

To close the project the final report was launched on the 4th of December at the Melbourne Town Hall. The event featured an opening address from the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Robin Scott. This event allowed us to thank all of the project participants for helping Home at Last to assist so many people who would have otherwise not have received assistance.

If you would like to receive a copy of the final report please contact Gemma White before the 4th of December on 9654 7389.

# HAAG 2015 Annual General Meeting



The HAAG Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 12th November and a wonderful turnout of over 50 members came along.

There were three major aspects to the day:

We elected our new management committee for the year and are delighted to welcome the following people who will serve for the next 12 months:

Daisy Ellery- Chairperson, Gordon Beard -Vice Chairperson, Sue Leigh – Secretary, Maree Norris- Treasurer, Victoria Gutsjahr, Bob Brooks, Phyll Williams, Sally Stabback

We welcome Daisy Ellery as our new Chairperson for the 2015-16 year and thank Vicky Gutsjahr for her fantastic service over the past year. New members of the committee who have been elected are:

Alicia Strobbe, Joan McKnight, Helen Vallack

It's fantastic to have a mixture of the ongoing committee members plus the addition of some new blood. Don't they say that's the best way to develop a successful footy team? Well, we are sure it will work for us as our recruits have a great track record from other walks of life and we are grateful for their involvement.

A special thanks to committee members Kris Spark and Meredith Munro who have served well but are not continuing. They have decided to take a break and concentrate on working in other areas of HAAG and also with other organisations.

We were saddened to hear that Siva Nallaratnam, who had been a committee member for many years, passed away recently. Our sympathies have been passed on to Siva's family.

The second part of the AGM involved discussion on the highlights of the year and there were two main achievements for the 2014-15 year: The development of HAAG's policy platform for the Victorian State Election and the ongoing funding of Home at Last.

Finally, the absolute highlight of the event was the talk given by Sheila Byard about The Crow Collection. The Crow Collection is an archive of documents held at the Victoria University that represent the work of Ruth and Maurie Crow. Ruth and Maurie were activists over many decades in inner Melbourne. Sheila talked about their work in many areas of urban planning that included the importance of affordable housing in a civil society. In Sheila's presentation she referred to a plaque that can be seen in Royal Park that states: "Commemorating the lives and work of Ruth and Maurie Crow. Activists in social and environmental planning. They inspired, guided and encouraged our communities in seeking to make a better world". Sheila referred to the Crow Collection as a "living library" that was always intended to be read and used for the purposes of continuing social activism. The documents cannot be borrowed but are available to be read at the Footscray Park Library by contacting Mark Armstrong-Roper on 9919 4809. Sheila's great lesson to the audience was that to create positive future we should always learn from the past. In that sense the Crow Collection is a memory bank that can be tapped into for that purpose.

Thank you to Guruswamy Perumal for kindly photographing another HAAG event.







## Retirement housing information

2015 has been a super busy year, and especially so over the last few months, with a combination of increased casework and policy work.

### CASEWORK

Where in the past residents in all forms of retirement housing were hesitant to exercise their rights, it seems there has now been a shift in thinking and there is a greater willingness from residents to have a voice and take action when they feel a sense of injustice.

Over the past 3 months I have assisted with 9 Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) applications. This is an unprecedented number in such a short space of time for the retirement housing service.

I am also currently involved in 3 relocation matters. I have found relocations to be exceptionally challenging because of the enormity of the situation and the significant stress it can cause people. These types of matters require a lot of time and resources in order to provide people with the best level of support possible.

Having a number of relocations coincide is also indicative of the overall housing sector for older people. Unfortunately there is a trend towards demolition, sale or closure of many Independent Living Units (ILUs) and Not-for-Profit (NFP) retirement villages due to the ageing stock and prime locations. This highlights an area where I feel significant policy work is required. Housing options for older people are already limited and with the continued closure or demolition of current stock this situation will only worsen and it needs to be addressed.

### POLICY WORK

It has been a very exciting time over the past few months in terms of opportunities for HAAG to respond to various reviews. This has also meant that the two working groups I facilitate, ILU and Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages (CARPAV), have also been very busy.





### Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) review:

The second phase of the RTA review has now begun with the first of six issues papers being released in November focused on Security of Tenure. It is our understanding that five more issues papers are to be released over the next 2 to 3 months.

#### JIMMY HAPPY IN HIS NEW GEELONG HOME

I submitted a proposal to a law firm requesting pro bono legal advice to assist the CARPAV working group to respond to the RTA review. The complexity of the residential parks and villages sector, coupled with legislation that does not provide proper protection for residents, has made responding to the review a little more difficult for this particular group of residents. That is why we are very pleased to announce that the proposal has been accepted by the law firm to assist us with our submission!

### Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation grant – ILU research project:

The ILU working group has been focused on preparing for the ILU research project that will begin on 1 February 2016. A job description has been posted for the project worker position and we hope to conduct interviews in mid-December.

This is a very exciting project for the ILU working group as it aims not only to document resident's experiences living in ILUs and NFP retirement villages, but also to increase the working group membership and the overall engagement of residents. That being said the ILU working group has increased in size this year, with more active members attending meetings, which is already a positive step forward.

### Swinburne projects:

Both working groups have also been working in collaboration with Swinburne to look at ageing and housing design. They have attended classes at the university and informed design students about the issues faced by older residents. Some members have also toured two Swinburne researchers around their homes to begin to inform the collaborative project being undertaken by HAAG and Swinburne around Quality of Life within retirement housing and what that means for people.

PHOTOS L TO R: CARPAV and ILU working groups, with Dr Alen Keirnan at Swinburne Seminar about Ageing and design. CARPAV working group members: Back: John Crompton, Marian Foster, Joane McKnight, John McKechnie, Max Penaluna, Lionel Foster. Front: Roger Stephenson, Jackie Crompton, Wyn Stenton, Russel Nilsson.

# Tenancy Matters

Shane McGrath- Tenancy Advice Worker

## Breaking Lease, biggest Tenancy issue

One of the biggest tenancy issues for our clients over the last quarter has been lease-breaking. Home At Last moves a lot of people into public housing, and some of them have to get out of unsuitable fixed-term leases to do so – which can mean they owe money to their landlords or don't get their bonds back. However, many tenants end up paying more than they should, and there are some simple steps you can take to protect yourself when you break a lease:

- Give as much notice as possible;
  - Only pay rent to the date you return the keys (the agent may tell you that you have to keep paying until they find a new tenant – but this is not true);
  - You may be liable for some costs, but don't pay anything unless you have seen evidence that the amounts are correct; and
  - If you're not sure about anything, get advice.
- These are only general rules and may not cover every situation – you should get specific advice about your circumstances if you are breaking a lease. But in general, these are good, basic steps that can help minimise any costs you're liable for.

## Stage 2 RTA Review

At the start of November the state government released the first of six issues papers that will form part of its review of residential tenancies legislation. This follows the broader opening consultation paper (you can see HAAG's submission on our website).



Barney is very happy in his new Geelong home.



Henrietta Hailey setting up her new home.



A happy client with his VCAT order after a win!

We believe security of tenure – including things like rent control, decent repairs, and the ability to make reasonable modifications to our homes – is the single biggest issue for older people in private rental. This leaves us with some hard questions– what are the best ways to protect older renters' security? What's realistic to demand? What trade off's could we make? – but also a great opportunity to advance our members' views.

# Case Work Summaries

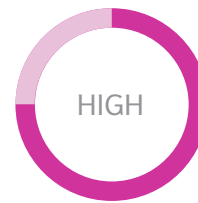
## RETIREMENT HOUSING ADVICE SUMMARY

### Greatest Success

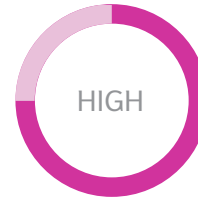
Securing Pro bono legal assistance to respond to the RTA review in relation to residential parks and villages

### Greatest Challenge

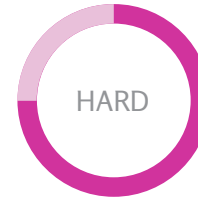
three relocation cases at the same time



CASE LOAD



PAPER WORK



CASE COMPLEXITY

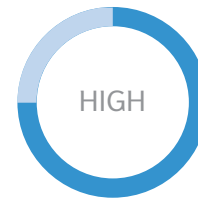
## HOUSING SUPPORT SUMMARY

### Greatest Success

Our housing outcomes: 92 Offers and 54 people rehoused!

### Greatest Challenge

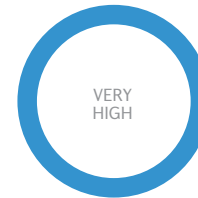
Not enough brokerage to keep pace with re-housing clients. Long waiting lists when referring into external services.



CASE LOAD



PAPER WORK



CASE COMPLEXITY

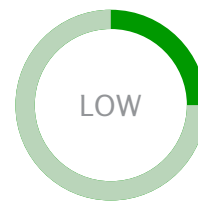
## TENANCY ADVICE SUMMARY

### Greatest Success

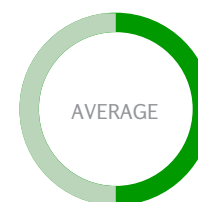
Finally winning a long-running, much delayed compensation claim.

### Greatest Challenge

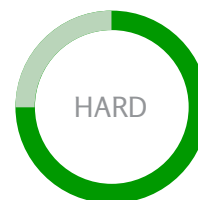
Trying to convince VCAT that site owners should be responsible for repairing broken fences.



CASE LOAD



PAPER WORK



CASE COMPLEXITY

# Housing Support

As we wrap up for the year here is an overview of what our housing support service does, and has achieved throughout the year. We have included two terrific re-housing stories to end the year on a happy note.

## Housing Information & Referral – Intake Service

The aim of the Information & Referral component of the Home at Last (HAL) service is to provide accessible and effective assistance to older people who have a housing problem.

Due to the uncertainty of ongoing funding during the 2014-15 reporting period the intake service saw many peaks and troughs in terms of client numbers, there were months that we weren't accepting any new clients along with putting in place a service transition out plan just in case we didn't receive ongoing funding..

### Fred's Story

By Intake Workers – Maria Cozzi, Naomi Gebert, Tegan Leeder & Paola Posso

Fred, 70, living in regional Victoria contacted the Intake service for assistance after receiving a 120 day Notice to Vacate on his private rental property. He had rented the property for 6 years and was very happy living there.

After receiving the notice Fred went into complete shock and denial and reported becoming extremely unwell during this time. His ill health meant he only sought help a couple of weeks before the notice was due to expire. He was referred into the HAL tenancy service to check the validity of the notice, and if valid, arrange VCAT representation for a 30 day extension of time on the Order of Possession.

During this time the Intake service researched what housing options were available in the area and then assisted him to complete a number of housing applications. An early housing, Segment 2, public housing application and two social housing applications were completed and lodged on his behalf, this was done by correspondence.

HAL's tenancy service arranged for the local community legal service to represent him at VCAT and even though an Order of Possession was granted his legal representative did manage to negotiate a 30 day extension of time.

The possibility of becoming homeless in 30 days became too much for Fred and this resulted in him becoming hospitalised for a couple of weeks. During this time the Intake service linked him into the local Community Connections Program (CCP) ensuring there was some one local that could provide on the ground support.

The CCP worker was able to follow up the local housing providers regarding the applications and take him to all necessary housing and health appointments as well as assisting him to organise his move.

Four weeks after commencing work with Fred, and one week before he was to be evicted, he was offered a new long term social housing property in his preferred location. The property is modified and meets all his 'ageing in place' needs and he is now looking forward to a settled and financially secure future.

## **ACHA Outreach Service**

Many older people are vulnerable due to being displaced from their homes and become homeless because of inappropriate and/or unaffordable housing that they are forced to occupy due to low income, poor health or lack of family support. Our outreach service provides intensive support for clients to find appropriate and affordable long term housing and once housed, we link them up with specialist support services to ensure that their health and aged care needs are addressed, plus they can maintain their independence.

### **Margaret's Story**

By Outreach workers – Melis Cevik and Anne Maher

Margaret, 70, was referred to Home at Last by a community organisation. Margaret moved from Tasmania to be close to her daughter and grand-daughter. However, she was unable to find any appropriate and affordable housing. Margaret is deaf and communicates with Auslan sign language. Literature on homelessness and disability suggests that people with disabilities can face further barriers in accessing homelessness services, such as, being unaware of existing services and not knowing how to access them. Margaret confirmed that this was also her experience and stated that her disability made her further vulnerable due to communication problems that she experienced with service providers. Margaret further stated that:

"I was very new in Melbourne and was not aware of services that could assist me find suitable housing. In the absence of a sign language interpreter, I communicate via email and text messages. Home At Last workers provided me with an email address and mobile telephone number so I was able to communicate with them whenever I needed something or had a question. They also came to see me with an Auslan interpreter so I can fully understand their intervention in helping me find housing so I can make informed choices".

Margaret was assisted by an Outreach worker to complete several housing applications for public housing and independent living units. After intensive advocacy to a number of providers, Margaret was offered an independent living unit, by an aged care provider. The Home at Last program assisted Margaret to move to her new unit and linked her up with services available in that region so Margaret can now maintain her desire to live independently. Margaret stated that she settled in well to her unit, feels no stress and enjoys her daily social activities which include a catch ups with her daughter and grand-daughter.

# Communications

HAAGs Communications Group has completed a Communications Strategy and we still meet monthly to discuss HAAGs progress towards our Communications goals. I'd like to thank our members Bob Brooks, Maree Norris, Daisy Ellery, Meredith Munro and staff Gemma White and Tegan Leeder for their commitment to the group and the plan we have formulated.

With the production of the Newsletters and Annual reports continuing to take the front seat (along with some urgent data reports) it has been difficult to keep up with the ambitious timeline set in the Communications Strategy, however progress is being made and monthly meetings continue to drive decisions and generate new ideas.

We have met with our Web designer Media Insights to discuss changes to the website that will better outline who HAAG is and what we stand for. There will also be more functionality to the site where users can complete membership forms, make donations and pay membership fees online.

It's an exciting time for HAAG with developments in every area of 'business' taking place. Effective communication of our ideals, demands and actions is the key to our successful growth.



## HAAG SERVICE DATA 01 AUG- 31OCT 2015

Total new Clients	276
Needing Housing support	181 (66%)
Needing Information Only	95 (34%)

### Main reason for seeking assistance (top 3)

Inappropriate/Inad. Housing	102 (37%)
Housing Crisis eg: NTV	70 (25%)
Housing Affordability Stress	45 (16%)

### Client Demographics

Average Age	67
Predominate Gender	Female (59%)

### Referrals to Housing Support/Information

HAAG Services	117
External Services	113

### HAAG Housing Outcomes

Clients Housed	54
Offers made	92
Average time to Rehouse	1-3 months

### Tenancy and Retirement Service Data<sup>^</sup>

Tenancy Clients	11
Top issue (19%)	Break Lease
VCAT representations	8

Retirement Info Clients	176
Average Age	70-79
Predominate Gender	Female
Residents at Info. sessions	137

### HAAG/ECCV Project- Target group data

New clients	75
Clients Housed	13
Referrals to/from Ethno-specific agencies	66

*All indicators have dramatically exceeded quota*

### Secondary Consultations\*

Total	49
Total hours spent on SC	7hrs
Consult. requested by other agency	33%

\*Cannot be counted as clients due to eligibility etc.

<sup>^</sup>Some figures are estimates only

# Campaign and Policy working group

The Campaigns and Policy Working Group has met on three occasions and is steadily working towards some exciting action ahead. Formed out of the successful Save Home at Last campaign, this working group is applying the successful strategies of our funding campaign for the purposes of tackling more major housing issues.

The next meeting of the working group will be looking towards developing campaign material that we can use in a range of ways. These include a new-look HAAG leaflet, a revised version of our Older Persons Housing Charter and a new Older Persons Housing Manifesto.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

What we stand for

- Housing is a human right
- All older people have the right to safe, secure & affordable housing

Our actions will be:

- Develop a strong voice for housing justice
- Be well known for what we stand for
- Publicise and campaign for more public housing

Some of the things we will do to achieve this are:

- Develop support and alliances
- Bring together research to support our case
- Inform the media
- Lobby government
- Organise public events and actions

If you would like to be involved in the Campaigns and Policy Working Group please contact Jeff on 03 9654 7389.

The next meeting of the working group will be looking towards developing campaign material that we can use in a range of ways. These include a new-look HAAG leaflet, a revised version of our Older Persons Housing Charter and a new Older Persons Housing Manifesto.

The next stage will include the development of a document on what HAAG stands for and what needs to be done. This will be in the form of a brief policy paper that can be distributed to politicians, the media and the general public.

Some other work that is planned for the near future that will complement the development of this information is the possibility of HAAG organising a joint forum with Council on the Ageing in late March 2016 and a pre state government budget submission that will be ready by mid-January.

Once this information has been developed the Campaigns and Policy Working Group will work closely with the Communications Working Group to look at the range of ways we can get our important message about housing justice for older people out there in the world.

**Housing for the Aged Action Group Inc.**

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