

March 2014 autumn edition



***Older
Tenant's
Voice
Since
1988***

Housing for the Aged Action Group

***Housing -
a right
not a
privilege!***



Jeff, Phyll and Carmel





Hello everyone

My name is Pauline Williamson and I have recently been elected as Chairperson of the HAAG Committee of Management.

I am looking forward to working with the Committee, management and staff, and the members of HAAG in meeting the objectives and principles of our group.

This will be a very busy and interesting year for us all, especially as it is an election years and we are already preparing the contents of our submissions to the major political parties.

As always your suggestions and ideas for inclusion in these submissions would be welcomed and appreciated.

I look forward to meeting you all at our forum on 5 June 2014 (more details in the newsletter), if not before.

With best wishes to you all,

Pauline Williamson

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Pauline'.

A month in the life of HAAG's Home at Last service

As well as providing a fundamental housing support service to older Victorians, HAAG's Home at Last service is involved in a wide range of activities that are building the service and working on the housing issues that affect the people we are here to help. Here is just a snapshot of some of the things we are working on at the moment:

- **Home at Last Quarterly service data for Oct-Dec 2013 submitted to KPMG (a consultant company that reports to the Department of Human Services about Home at Last's service delivery).**
- **As part of Home at Last service consolidation, staff are developing policies for all areas of service operation**
- **Met with Department of Human Services to seek government support for Home at Last service promotion and engagement. A meeting was held with representatives of the Director of Community and Economic Participation Branch. Similar meetings are planned with Department of Health and Consumer Affairs Victoria**
- **Met with the Director for Consumer Affairs Victoria to discuss our policy and election platforms, as well as our casework, around private renters, caravan and residential parks and villages and not-for-profit retirement villages**
- **Home at Last is partnering with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria to seek funding for a project for getting older people from CALD backgrounds. Applications going to the Ross Trust and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund**
- **Home at Last is partnering with the Hume region Homelessness Network to**

organise a forum on housing issues for older people

- **Home at Last is partnering with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council to conduct a community awareness and engagement project for the Peninsula community. Will also involve PYFS, MI Health, Mt Eliza ACAS and HACC services**
- **Discussions were held with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) to establish partnership for referrals and continued engagement**
- **Discussions were held with Justice Connect to explain the Home At Last service and to establish referral pathways and increase collaboration**
- **Discussions were held with the Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC) around establishing a clear log of claims for retirement village reform**
- **Service promotions are being conducted by our Community Education Workers in the City of Greater Geelong and City of Brimbank**
- **Investigating ways of further developing Home at Last services with an aged care perspective. A key focus of this work is the provision of our services as a diversion program for people who are being prematurely housed in residential care. We have had a highly positive response from many aged care service providers that are referring many people to Home at Last to find independent housing for their clients rather than housing them in residential care accommodation.**
- **Our 6 month report for July-December submitted to Consumer Affairs Victoria on tenancy advice and retirement housing services**
- **The Private Renters, Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages and Independent Living Units Working Groups are preparing a policy platform on rental housing issues for older people that will look at law reform, affordable housing supply and adequate services as three key areas**
- **We have joined coalition of aged focused coalition of organisations auspiced by COTA for policy platform development for state election**
- **We met with Opposition Housing spokesperson, Hon. Richard Wynne**
- **We met with Greens Housing spokesperson, Hon. Greg Barber**
- **We met with Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs, Robin Scott**
- **We have requested a meeting with Angela Connors, Director, Service Design and Development, DHS, to discuss the work of Home at Last and the need for a program of support for older people at risk of homelessness. This is a follow up to our request to meet with the Housing Minister.**
- **We have requested a meeting with Federal Social Services Minister Hon. Kevin Andrews**
- **Launched our RMIT Student report on 'Realities of Being a Renter in Later Life'.**
- **We met with Sarah Toohey, Council to Homeless Persons regarding Home at Last, the homelessness sector reform issues and the problem of Commonwealth funding.**
- **We went to Canberra for a forum on the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We also held a meeting with advisor to Senator Mitch Fifield, Assistant Minister for Social Services to discuss Home at Last and the ACHA Program. We also met with the Director of the Policy Section, Home and Community Care Branch, Ageing and Aged Care Division, Department of Social Services**
- **We met with Gerard Mansour, Commissioner for Senior Victorians and will participate in a forum on the development of the state government's Seniors Participation Action Plan**

Snap Shot of Home at Last (HAL) Housing Service Data October-December 2013

New People	Total
People needing housing support	140
People seeking housing options information only	68
Secondary consultations	69
TOTAL	277
Main Reason for Seeking Assistance	
Housing Crisis (e.g. recently evicted)	50
Housing affordability stress (e.g. rent too high)	49
Inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions	46
Financial difficulties	18
Relationship/family breakdown	17
Family violence/elder abuse	9
Time out from family/other situation	7
Lack of family and or/community support	5
Previous accommodation ended	3
Medical issues	3
Non-family violence	1
TOTAL	208
Housing Support Statistics	
HAL Internal Program Referrals	
HAL Assistance with Care & Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program	73
HAL Tenancy Advice Service	33
HAL Retirement Housing Service	2
Sub Total	108
HAL External Referrals	
ACHA Programs	25
Community Connections Programs	26
Housing Support (other e.g. Local Government)	5
SAAP Services	2
HACC Services	6
Other Health and Aged Care services	9
Sub Total	73
TOTAL	181

HAL Housing Outcomes

Tenure Type	Property Offers	People Housed
Public Housing	41	29
Social Housing	7	5
Independent Units	1	0
Total	49	34

*Tenure Type/Wait Time	< 1 Month	1-3 Months	3-6 Months	>6 Months
Public Housing	16	19	4	4
Social Housing	1	3	1	1
Total	17	22	5	5

**From Application to Property Offer*

Tenure before HAL re-housing	People
Private Rental	11
Staying with family/friends	10
Homeless	4
Rooming Houses	1
Public Housing	5
Sharing private rental/boarding	3
Total	34

Rent Affordability Outcomes	25%	30%
People whose rental payments reduced	29	5

HAAG IS ON RADIO 3CR - 'RAISE THE ROOF'

Every 4th Wednesday at 6pm:

***Next show =
23 April 2014***

If you would like to share something with us on our upcoming radio shows please contact the office and have a chat to Marc (our 3CR show co-ordinator)
9654 7389

“There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age”.
-Sophia Loren

ELECTION PLATFORMS

What are HAAG's working groups aiming for this election year?

The Older Private Renters Working Group (OPRWG) consists of those of us who are, or who have been living in private rental accommodation so we have collective experience of what needs to be done to improve the situation for renters. We've been meeting on a regular basis and have come up with various ideas for future action.

I think our biggest focus has been to lobby for more public housing.

So far letters have been sent to the Minister, Wendy Lovell and the Shadow Minister, Richard Wynne. We also had a meeting with Richard Wynne where members of the working group expressed their concerns about the problems of living in private rental accommodation. We hope to meet with the Greens in the near future. I think it's very important that politicians hear from older renters about what it's really like to live in insecure and expensive rental accommodation and the effects this can have on their wellbeing.

Because we want to focus on lobbying politicians before the next election we have formed a sub-committee to produce a log of claims to add force to our argument.

So far the log of claims has looked at examples of other logs of claims from other community organisations and a HAAG fact sheet called The Seven Deadly Sins of Private Rental that was based on what members of the working group said about the problems of living in private rental. Using these we have begun to map out the most important issues that private renters face.

The major concerns that the group have brought up have been about security of tenure and the spiralling cost of private rental but they are also concerned about the lack of efficient and affordable heating and cooling, dodgy estate agents and landlords and the difficulty of getting public housing.

Members of OPRWG have also volunteered to help on Home at Last stalls including one at the Survival Concert, and one at Flinders Street Station.

We are also hoping to get some media publicity on radio and perhaps with a short film and generally draw public attention to the scandal of older people in insecure and inappropriate rental accommodation.

It's a great group to work with so anyone else who wants to join us membership is open.

Written by Sue Leigh

The Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages (CARPAU) working group is made up of residents living in parks and village around Victoria.

CARPAU meets once a month and has been working towards reform in parks for over 8 years.

Through various formats, such as monthly meetings, teleconferences and surveys the group has been slowly compiling their log of claims to highlight what some of the key issues are for permanent residents living in parks and villages.

Issues that will appear in the log claims include such items as:

- * A lack of management standards and a lack of mandatory training for managers**
- * A lack of consistent, legislated security of tenure across the sector**
- * High utility charges and no access to the ombudsman scheme for some parks and villages**
- * Poor unit design that does not take into account the changing needs of an older population**
- * Poor village design that does not allow for clear and proper access in emergencies and other situations**
- * Exemptions from building codes and the issues that can arise because of that**
- * High deferred management fees with no regulation or legislation**

The ultimate aim of CARPAU is to encourage separate legislation for residential villages, to take into account the significant investment residents make when purchasing a moveable dwelling.

CARPAU will invite the Minister for Consumer Affairs Victoria, Heidi Victoria, and the Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs, Robin Scott, to attend a meeting later in the year to discuss some of the key issues, aims and recommendations of the group.

CARPAU will also begin to engage with media around the matters raised and we hope that residents from across Victoria will be interested in becoming involved with our campaign.

Membership is always open and people are always welcome to contribute to our work.

(Right) some of the CARPAU working group in 2013



The Independent Living Unit (ILU) working group is made up of residents living in not-for-profit retirement villages and in rental ILUs.

This group began a couple of years ago and took a break when the direction and focus was lost. It has since been rejuvenated into a smaller group (for now), with a clearer focus and intent.

The aim of the ILU group is to have a broad review of the retirement village sector and a review of the Retirement Villages Act 1986 (RVA).

The group has worked on a comparison between the RVA and the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA), to understand better what rights each set of residents might have compared to the other, as well as what dispute resolution procedures are available and what avenues of access to justice exist. It also looked at the obligations a village operator has and how the two laws differ in relation to the management of a communal village environment.

The group is now working on comparisons between the actual structure of the villages and the units to see whether there is great difference between a village and unit covered by the RVA versus a village and unit covered by the RTA.

All of the information above will be included in a log of claims that the group will compile to distribute to members of parliament. The Minister for Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs will also be invited to meet with the ILU group to discuss this log of claims in more detail.

The group will engage with media further down the track and is currently looking at distributing surveys around Victoria to other residents living in ILUs and not-for-profit retirement villages to try and paint a better picture of the current state of the sector.

Membership to join the group is open to other ILU and not-for-profit residents who are interested in making a change on a bigger scale in this form of housing.



(Left) some of the ILU working group members

HAAG General Meeting

Below is a summary of HAAG Member Recommendations about the HAAG Election Platform, noted down at the HAAG general meeting on 13 March 2014:

- **The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) needs improving but there are concerns that focussing on strengthening the RTA in the HAAG campaign will take the focus away from public housing as a more suitable option for older people on a fixed income.**
- **The election platform should look specifically at how government cuts are impacting on older people. Particularly how any future cuts to the homelessness sector will impact on older people who are at risk of homelessness as well as the sector in general.**
- **The link between Home Care, Aged Care and Housing should be raised as part of the election platform. Perhaps local government should be a focal point as local government is responsible for Home and Community Care (HACC) services.**
- **The election platform should include concerns about privatisation generally and the importance of keeping public assets public.**
- **Planning concerns: Older person's housing needs to be close to public housing so that people who don't drive can get around.**
- **The importance of older persons' housing being located close to doctors, hospitals and other infrastructure was also noted.**
- **The election platform should include an opposition to selling off public housing.**

Summary of Suggested Campaign Strategies

- **Suggested that we go out and make our campaign public, knock on doors etc. as making politicians and the public aware of the issues is essential to creating change.**
- **Providing evidence to back up our election platform is important for convincing the government to act, and the student report provides some of this evidence.**
- **It was suggested that all members send the student report to their local MP**
- **Collective action- one single platform instead of a number of smaller groups might be more effective. Additionally, using a public figure to champion our cause was also suggested.**

**Photo taken at the
General meeting by
Guruswamy Perumal**



Where do you look for Information? Survey- Interim report:

A HUGE thank you goes out to everyone who has already filled in the “Where do you look for Information” Survey. We have received some extremely useful feedback, which has already started to inform Community Education’s approach to where we place information in local areas.

The more surveys we receive, the more accurate the information we gather is, so we ask that anyone who hasn’t already filled out the survey, please do so (if you still have a copy from the last HAAG newsletter please use that, otherwise call 9654 7389 and we can send you a new copy).

In the meantime here are some of the results we have received so far:

In the past, 33% of respondents went to local council for information about social and community services. The other most popular places to look for information were Radio and Newspapers (13%) and Health Centres and their GP (13%).

In response to the Question “Where did you hear about HAAG?”:

- 33% heard about HAAG from friends or acquaintances**
- 20% heard about HAAG in the Newspaper or on the Radio**
- 10% heard about HAAG at Ross House**

This emphasises the essential role of our membership in spreading the word about HAAG and Home at Last within their community.

Many respondents would like to see HAAG and Home at Last Brochures and information in their local councils, and in the media.

The most popular media sources amongst respondents were:

- 1. TV**
- 2. Radio (3AW and Radio National)**
- 3. The Herald Sun**

The least popular was the internet- and many people noted that they don’t have a computer.

Community Education has taken your feedback on board and will endeavour to get our brochures to local councils, in the media and in other recommended places. A full report will be released towards the end of the year, when more survey’s have been received.

In the mean time, keep up the good work in telling your friends and family about HAAG - as, according to our survey, you are our most effective tool!

HAL Community Education Activities

Indicator	Activities	Participants
Community Awareness Activities		
Community Presentation	14	303
Forum	3	1210
Clinic	1	54
Agency Presentation	92	297
Sub Total	110	1864
Mail Outs		
To Agencies	24	1858
To Community Groups	15	1087
Sub Total	39	2945
Brochure drop		
Public brochure drop	14	3007
Sub Total	12	3007
Media Engagement		
Radio	4	7
Newspaper	5	5
Magazine	8	848
Film	0	0
TV	0	0
Sub Total	17	860
Grand Total	192	8,676

About the Immune System By Phyll Williams, 1996

Things old and worn give me hayfever.
I curl up on the carpet in front of the fire
And the sniffles start.
It must be dust mites.

I reach for a motley mohair or fuzzy
fairisle cardigan and my throat prickles.
it must be mothballs.

I see the pensioner shoppers sitting around
in the local supermarket forecourt while
they sip slowly, always slowly, at a coffee cup...
and my eyes fill with tears.
It must be hayfever.

**Chill Out festival
Daylesford**

**Our Super HAAG,
otherwise known as
Fionnuala, taking Daylesford
by storm! (left)**

**The Chill Out information
stall (below)**



Flinders St Stall

**Maree and Vicki, committee
members, handing out
information (above)**

**Anne at the information table
(right)**



Some facts on homelessness and housing poverty amongst older Australians

Older people and homelessness

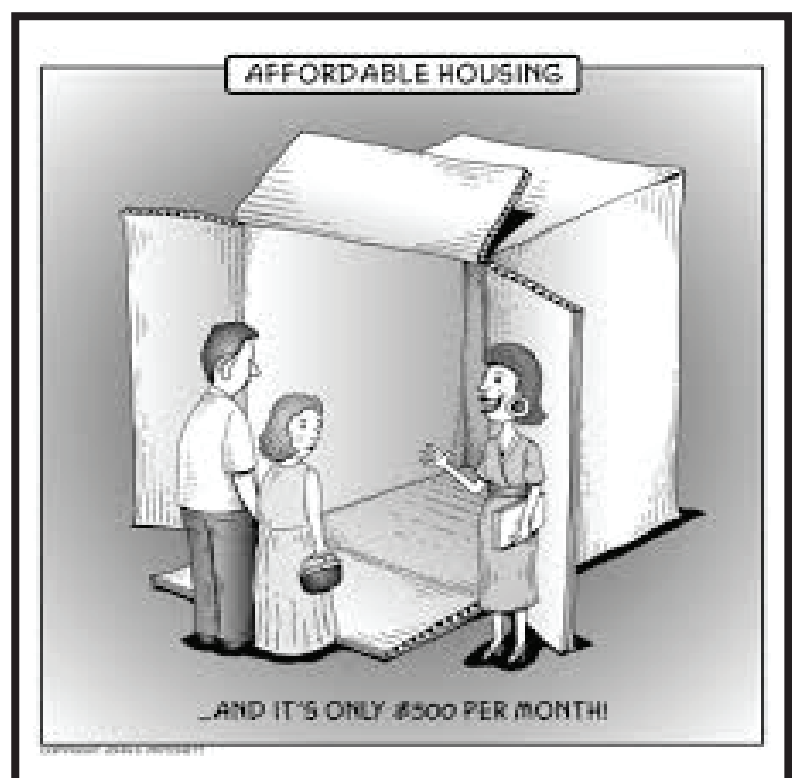
Older people make up a significant portion of the homeless population in Australia. The numbers of older homeless people in Australia is increasing with 12,246 homeless older people in 2006 and 14,851 in 2011 (Petersen).

According to the ABS, 14,851 people aged 55 and over were experiencing homelessness on Census night 2011. This is approximately one out of seven people counted as experiencing homelessness in Australia. Over 55's make up over 25% of the Australian population, and while they are under-represented in the homelessness data, they are even less likely to receive support from specialist homelessness services. People over 55 consist of only 6% of clients accessing specialist homelessness services in 2011 – 12. This is partly due to the service system design but also indicates that is a lack of beds for older Australians within the homelessness service system (Homelessness Australia 2014).

Older people at risk of homelessness

There is a rapid increase occurring in the number of older people at risk of homelessness. The number of older people renting privately in Australia has increased by 100,826 persons from 235,348 in 2006 to 336,174 in 2011. In Victoria there were 52,309 older renters in 2006 and this rose to 75,470 in 2011, an increase of 23,161. This represents a rise of 44% over the five year period from 2006-2011 (Petersen). This means that the population of older people in private rental housing will almost double every ten years. This is a disaster for the future independence and welfare of the growing proportion of older Australians who will rely on rental accommodation for their retirement years.

Generally older people rent in the private market out of necessity rather than choice. Private rental housing is fundamentally insecure, unaffordable, unsafe and unadaptable for older people. Affordability of private rental accommodation is a key problem. An aged pensioner is paying 63% of their income in rent for an average one bedroom flat in Melbourne. This includes income from all sources such as pension, pension supplement, energy supplement and rent assistance (HAAG analysis).



Major forum coming up!
Put the date in your diary....

Housing for the Aged Action Group is organising a major forum to be held on Thursday 5th June 2014 at Victoria University in Flinders Street Melbourne.

Called Just Surviving or Thriving? Older Victorians at Risk of Homelessness the event will feature important recent research that describes the current and rapidly growing problem of housing for older people.

Featured speakers are:

Dr. Maree Petersen from University of Queensland who will present her recent research called Preventing first time homelessness amongst older Australians. This work provides a national understanding of older people's homelessness in Australia and informs prevention strategies by drawing on interventions undertaken across Australia. The research is based on information derived from more than 500 clients of the national Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program.

Dr Wendy Stone is Director of the AHURI Research Centre—Swinburne University of Technology. Wendy will present her work, produced in 2013 in conjunction with Terry Burke, Kath Hulse and Liss Ralston called Long term private rental in a changing private rental sector. This project responded to the need for more up-to-date information about the state of private rental markets and in particular the effects on households of long-term private rental.

The event will also provide the opportunity for HAAG to launch its Victorian election policy campaign platform. This segment will feature speakers from HAAG's three working groups that are focused on the following key housing areas: Private renters, independent living units and caravan and residential parks.

The Minister for Housing The Hon. Wendy Lovell has been invited to open the forum.

More information about the forum will be sent out to all HAAG members in the near future with details about registering for this important occasion.

...EPITELOUS ENA SPITI

That is...

...HOME AT LAST...

...in Greek

Melbourne's population is made up of people from all over the world. Residents from more than 180 countries live in Melbourne, who speak over 233 languages and dialects and follow 116 religious and faiths, making Melbourne one of the most multicultural cities in the world. Melbourne is also said to have the largest Greek speaking population outside of Europe, after Athens and Thessaloniki. Greek migration to Australia dates back to 1827 but the vast majority of Greeks arrived between 1945 and 1982.

This is a story about one of Home At Last's clients, Con.

Con, is 78, migrated to Australia in 1966 at the age of 30 with his wife and his five children. He chose Melbourne to live as he had friends already residing here in Melbourne from his home town, in Athens. Con was always involved in running a small business and owned his own milk bar. He says his milk bar was unable to compete with the giant supermarkets and had to close his business some years ago. With no income coming in, he had to sell the family home, forcing him and his wife to move in with one of their sons. This also coincided with him losing his wife. Con wanted to live independently again as long as possible, requested assistance from a Greek speaking case worker from Australian Greek Welfare Society, whereupon he was referred to HAAG / HAL for housing assistance in October 2013.

Con says that:

"I was feeling very dependent on my adult children and this increased my feelings of isolation. My son's house was in a region that I had never lived in before so it was very hard for me to leave home unless my son provided me with transport. I was feeling very isolated as I cannot speak English therefore I wanted to be close to my old friends. I wanted to be in an area that I was familiar with; where there are other Greek speaking people and Greek cafes. I also wanted a little court yard so I can again grow my own vegetables and herbs again".

In consultation with Con, we applied for public housing in the inner metro East area. Con was offered a public housing property within three months and close to where he had previously lived for many years. Con moved to his new accommodation in December 2013, just before Christmas.

I visited Con recently to follow up on how he was settling into his new accommodation. He remarked to me that:

"I am now very happy. I have my own place, my friends, and neighbours and most importantly, I have my independence again. I have a small front yard and a back court yard where I enjoy growing my own vegetables, so it is Home at last".

Melis Cevik
Outreach Worker,
Home at Last-ACHA Program.



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

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Home At Last: 1300 765 178

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**Housing for the Aged Action Group offers
Free and Confidential Advice to older people renting their home.**



**1st floor Ross
House
247-251 Flinders
Lane,
Melbourne, 3000**

**Admin: 9654 7389
Intake: 1300 765 178
(cost of a local call)**

Email: haag@oldertenants.org.au

**There are four main aspects
to our service:**

Housing options

**Private renters assistance and tenancy advice
Outreach care and housing support
Retirement housing advice and support**

**Interested tenants and residents are encouraged to join
Housing for the Aged Action Group
Pensioners No Charge**



**We are on the Web:
www.oldertenants.org.au**