

**What a busy year...**



**Time for a break!**

**December 2013 summer edition**



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

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

**Housing for the Aged Action Group**





### **Chairperson Report by Dalene Salisbury**

**At the November 2013 Housing for the Aged Action Group Annual General Meeting I was elected as Chairperson. This I feel was by default as our previous Chairperson Wyn Stenton was going to continue to chair for 2013-2014 financial year. However at the last minute she became unwell and had to withdraw her nomination for the Chair and Committee. Her loss to the Committee of Management will be felt by all of us at HAAG. The HAAG staff and Committee of Management wish her a quick recovery.**

**HAAG Committee of Management has many new members so there will be a great deal of knowledge to be shared between all of the members. It will be an exciting time for the committee and staff as there are many issues to be dealt in the coming year.**

**I wish everyone at HAAG staff, committee and members a pleasant Christmas with family and friends and for the people who may not have family and friends have a beautiful and peaceful Christmas.**

### **Community Grants**

**HAAG would like to sincerely thank two new funding contributors. During October we received grants from the StreetSmart small grants program and Grill'd Restaurant, Local Matters Program.**

**The StreetSmart Café Program takes action against homelessness by raising funds and awareness for grass roots organisations. Projects provide critical services and emergency aid as well as promoting social inclusion and sustainable change for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. 100% of donations raised by public contributions are distributed in the form of grants. To date StreetSmart have raised and distributed over \$2.55million to 724 grassroots projects. For more information on StreetSmart, including how to donate  
[www.streetsmartaustralia.org.au](http://www.streetsmartaustralia.org.au)**

**The Grill'd group of restaurants run a Local Matters Program that donates \$500.00 every month to groups chosen by customers as those making a difference in their local community. The Local Matters Program donates to approximately 1,000 local groups per year and most importantly these are groups that otherwise lack recognition for the good work they do. For more information on the program [www.grill'd.com.au](http://www.grill'd.com.au)**

**Grants received from both programs will be used to purchase essential items for HAL service clients that are establishing a new home.**

## Annual General Meeting 2013

HAAG's AGM was held on Thursday 21st November and the occasion was enjoyed by all. There were a number of important aspects of the day that the 60+ people that came along found very interesting, including the 30th celebration of HAAG, and most of our members became involved in a number of ways.

Firstly, some important changes to our constitution occurred. Changes to the Model Rules and the Incorporations Act meant we had to introduce some clauses that will improve the democratic processes of HAAG by ensuring that there is more transparency about HAAG's records and procedures at meetings. Additionally, it was decided that we would change the timing of our general meetings from monthly to quarterly in line with actual practice. Also, our new constitution allows for up to six people to be appointed to the management committee if we require certain expertise in areas such as finance and organisational planning. Importantly, these positions do not have voting rights on committee decisions so the power will always reside with our elected committee.

Secondly, we elected a new management committee. We were saddened that our three term chairperson Wyn Stenton had to stand down due to ill health, but we hope that Wyn will continue to participate at HAAG in the near future. Also departing the committee was Ena Ahern and we thank Ena for all her hard work over the years for HAAG and Marian Foster. On the positive side we elected a number of new members who will breathe fresh life into the organisation and we thank them for stepping forward.





**So the new committee for 2013-2014 is:**

<b>Chairperson</b>	<b>Dalene Salisbury</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Bob Brooks</b>
<b>Vice Chairperson</b>	<b>Pauline Williamson</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Maree Norris</b>

<b>Committee members</b>	<b>Eunice Walters</b>
	<b>“Siva” Nallaratnam</b>
	<b>Gordon Beard</b>
	<b>Carmel McMennemin</b>
	<b>Kris Spark</b>
	<b>Sally Stabback</b>
	<b>Sue Leigh</b>
	<b>Victoria Gutsjahr</b>



**Third, we heard from a fantastic guest speaker Patricia Gillespie who is conducting research on the life experience of older people living in public housing. Having a public housing background herself, Patricia told the meeting about her early life and how important public housing has been to her and the cohesive way these communities work together. It is the experience of people over the age of seventy that Patricia is interviewing for her research and she is keen to hear from more HAAG members who might wish to be involved.**

**Lastly, we were sad to farewell our long term staff member April Bragg. You will see a special article on April in this edition of the newsletter. Everyone stayed for a satisfying lunch at what was one of the more memorable AGM's conducted by HAAG.**

## **Second time lucky!!!**

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

**Robert referred himself to HAAG / HAL for housing assistance in August 2012 after the house in which he was living in Melton was sold. Robert was privately renting his house and was paying \$250.00 rent per week, which did not leave him much to live on from his pension. As the house was sold to a new owner, Robert was expecting another increase in his rent and he stated that he would not be able to afford this. During my first home visit to Robert, he said that he really wanted to move from the Western region to the Southern region somewhere close to Monash Medical Centre such as Oakleigh or Ashwood. This was because Robert's only daughter who has a serious health condition, receives care at Monash Medical Centre on a regular basis. Robert stated that he wanted to live close to his daughter so whenever she is admitted to Monash Medical Centre for treatment, he could be there to support and care for her.**

**In consultation with Robert, I applied for public housing as well as social housing for him and lucky enough he was offered a social housing property in Altona managed by Yarra Community Housing. Well, Altona was still in the Western region, but was much closer to Monash Medical Centre, closer than Melton anyway. So Robert accepted the offer and moved to Altona in November 2012. Robert states that although his new place was much more affordable and in excellent condition, he still wanted to be close to his daughter.**

**To get Robert housed in the Southern region I assisted Robert with an application, and supporting documentation about his needs, to Port Phillip Housing Association, one of the largest Social Housing providers in the Southern region. Robert was placed on a waiting list, which we were told was a very long one. Although Robert never stopped hoping that a property in the Southern region would become available for him, he was not very optimistic about the waiting time. Robert continued to support and care for his daughter, travelling from Altona to Clayton each week, and whenever she was admitted to hospital.**

**In September 2013, we were contacted by Port Phillip Housing Association seeking applicants from HAL for a brand new social housing apartment complex in Ashwood. Robert was then contacted to lodge an application for the new site, and in turn was invited to attend an interview. For the interview I provided Robert with a letter of support outlining his need to be housed in that location. We then heard the good news that Robert was offered a property and assisted Robert to move again, which he says 'second time lucky'**

**I called Robert the other day to follow up on how he was settling in his new property. He said that:**

***"This is a new beginning for me, I see my daughter on a regular basis. She has some good days and some bad days, but the main thing is where I live now I am so close to where she lives and the hospital therefore I am there in no time to see her, support her. My blood pressure somehow is stabilised as well, I think less driving is helping. I am truly grateful to HAAG / HAL for all assistance, not once but twice"***

**On behalf of HAAG / HAL, we are very pleased that we were able to assist Robert, not once but twice!!!**

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

## **Community Education: "Where do you look for information" Survey**

In this edition of the HAAG newsletter, the community education team have included a survey called "Where do you look for Information" (to be found on the next page).

We would very much appreciate if you could fill it out and return it in the included envelope as soon as you get a chance.

Community Education has been placing information about Home at last, such as brochures and posters, around the state. We want to be sure we are putting this information where people are most likely to look for it. For example, if most people go to their doctor for information, we want to make sure that we are getting brochures into all GPs, or if most people look in the newspaper, we want to make sure we are advertising there.

As HAAG members and people who may have used HAAG services in the past, it is really important that we get your feedback about where you go to find information about services like ours. This information will help us create a more efficient and effective community education strategy.

If you know other people who would be interested in filling out the survey (in groups you attend etc) please call us on 9654 7389 and we can send you some additional surveys. The more we get back the better we can do our job!

Thanks for your help!  
Gemma and Fionnuala

## **HAAG Xmas and New Year closing times:**

**Last day for 2013:  
Friday 20 December**

**Office reopens:  
Thursday  
2 January 2014**



## Where do you look for information?

Home at Last's Community Education program aims to get information about Home at last to as many people as possible, across Victoria. This survey will be used to guide where we put Home at Last brochures and posters, to make sure our materials are going where older people are most likely to look for them. Your contribution to this is very much appreciated.

1. In the past, where have you found information about local social and community services?  
(circle where applicable)

RIP OUT PAGE

Your GP

Neighbourhood House

Community Health Centre

Migrant Resource Centre

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Centrelink

Hospital

Local Council

Local Library

2. If you needed information about local social and community services (like emergency aid, housing services, legal assistance, etc.) where would you look/who would you ask first?
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where did you hear about HAAG or Home at Last?
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Where would you most like information about social and community services to be available?
- \_\_\_\_\_

(survey continues onto next page)

**5. In order to advertise the Home at Last service, we would like to know what media sources you access the most.**

**Please number from 1 to 8 in order of preference.**

**1 = what you watch, listen to or read the most**

**8 = what you watch, listen to or read the least**

☐

**Television**

☐

**Radio- Please specify what show/station:**

☐

**The Senior"**

☐

**Fifty Plus News**

☐

**The Herald Sun**

☐

**The Age**

☐

**Other newspaper or print publication (including news letters) Please specify:**

☐

**Internet- Please specify what websites:**

☐

**Other Sources- Please specify:**

**Please mail back to HAAG using the self-addressed envelope enclosed.**





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

***Every 4th Wednesday at 6pm:  
Last show for 2013 -  
25 December  
Tune in for our Xmas wrap up!***

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**

## ***DID YOU KNOW?***

***The percentage of Australians over 55 in private rental increased by 2% between the 2006 and 2011 census and now sits at 11%. This is based on Centrelink data and represents people receiving some sort of government payment.***

***This translates to approximately 336,000 low income older Australians in private rental and approximately 75,000 low income older Victorians in private rental.***

**He who is of calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age, but to him who is of an opposite disposition youth and age are equally a burden.**

**- Plato**



## FAREWELL COMRADE!

Everyone at HAAG is saddened by the news that April Bragg has announced she is moving on after 14 years of service to the organisation. This decision comes at a time when HAAG has reached its most successful stage in its history with the recently announced re-funding of our Home at Last service up until at least June 2015. April's work over her time at HAAG has had a significant focus on the development of a comprehensive advocacy service for older people in Victoria and in many ways Home at Last is the culmination of a 'job well done'.

Over the 14 years April has dedicated long hours towards the goal and it is now amazing to see the fantastic way that Home at Last is operating so comprehensively as a 'one-stop-shop' of housing assistance for older people at risk of homelessness right across Victoria. With this goal achieved we can understand April's decision to move on to new challenges and also spend more quality time with her family.

On top of April's career at HAAG she has also dedicated herself to the needs of tenants and housing issues more broadly over 30 years. Many people know of April's work in the public tenants movement during the 1980's and 1990's with the Brunswick Public Tenants Association and the Public Tenants Union where she worked on many campaigns on issues like unfair evictions, fair rents, energy action and improvements to the design of housing on Office of Housing estates. This work was based on April's philosophy that tenants must have control of the processes, be fully involved in decision making and also have a major role in the implementation of changes to laws, policies and physical infrastructure of estates.

Ironically the success of true tenant-led community development actions, led by April and others, that demanded greater responses by government to build more public housing and implement fair management practices, saw across the board de-funding of tenant groups, regional housing councils and the Public Tenants Union in the mid-1990's. It was no coincidence that this extreme reaction by the state government to silence the voice of tenants occurred at a time when the privatisation push began in earnest and the dismantling of public housing began.



In many ways HAAG has been the last bastion of tenant involved housing policy action in the community sector and this enabled April to continue her vital work on behalf of tenants. Over her time at HAAG April has played a major role in organising a number of forums, actions and events highlighting the problems of older people in housing poverty and the need for more public housing. Some of these included the Having Our Say Forum at Melbourne Town Hall in 1999, Having Our Say Again in 2002, Back to the Future in 2004, Ageing In Place? in 2008, Ageing on the Edge in 2011 and Home at Last in 2013.

As well as her community and campaigning work April's other major contribution that will provide an enduring legacy at HAAG is her incredible advocacy work for older people at risk of homelessness. April has assisted literally thousands of older people living in unaffordable, insecure, unhealthy and in some cases dangerous housing conditions and found them housing solutions for life. Her philosophy, based on the human right to decent housing, always saw her challenging unfair government policies, advocating and lobbying to the highest levels of government and seeking housing justice for individuals in a tireless approach that leaves no stone unturned in her efforts to get the best possible outcome. April has often joked about how hard and lengthy this work can be and that each successful outcome on an individual basis "is no way to house the nation" as she recognised that accessing housing is so difficult because governments have progressively tightened the supply of affordable housing. April's continual success in the face of this mounting opposition is all the more remarkable.

Another important area of April's work has been lobbying for improvements to the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) Program where she has made a significant national contribution to the development of effective services for older people. Over many years April has continually lobbied for more resources, improving guidelines for the program's operation and ensuring that all services operate with an effective model of housing outcomes and allied care. In 2011 April, in conjunction with past HAAG ACHA Worker Ena Ahern, organised and hosted the first national meeting of ACHA workers in Melbourne. April also linked closely with Dr. Maree Petersen from the University of Queensland on the development of vital research into older people at risk of homelessness that incorporated case data and experiences of ACHA services across Australia. This work has culminated in a recently released report for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) that will provide valuable evidence to encourage governments to expand the ACHA program and homelessness support services for older people.

And so we farewell April but we will ensure that her legacy lives on in the way we continue to provide services to older Victorians. Her philosophy is embedded in the way we work, our ongoing training of HAAG advocates, our approach to lobbying governments and development of partnerships with agencies. This work will continue strongly due to April's impact on the way HAAG has grown over the years.





**The Private Renters Working Group has continued to meet to develop a strategy for lobbying to get improvements in tenancy law and government housing policies.**

**The highlight of the working group activities so far was a meeting held on Wednesday 20th November with the Shadow Housing Minister the Hon. Richard Wynne. Richard Wynne was the Housing Minister when the Labor Party was last in power before the last state election and it is expected he would be the Minister in a future Labor Government.**

**About twenty members came together on the day. Our main intention in the meeting was to ensure that Mr. Wynne could hear clearly the problems facing older people in the private rental market. This was done by giving every member of the working group the opportunity to speak about their own experience and also say what areas of reform are needed most. As usual our members were incredible in the way they not only spoke on their personal issues but provided recommendations that would help others who might have similar problems. Of course the issues raised covered our four most important concerns about the private rental market of secure tenure, affordability, poor housing conditions and the lack of adaptability of private rental housing. Working group members also demonstrated to Mr. Wynne the great relief and ongoing benefits of the provision of public and social housing and why governments should ensure that the sector continues to grow. Members also made it clear that good advocacy services are also required to help vulnerable older people when they are faced with precarious housing and are at risk of homelessness.**

**Mr. Wynne stated that he is interested in working towards longer lease arrangements in private rental accommodation and introducing health and safety measures as minimum housing standards as part of the Labor Party's policy platform for the election. We responded that this will only work for older people if the other issues of affordability and adaptability are also included and we said that this can be done as the Retirement Villages Act offers cost of living linked rents and fees. He acknowledged that and said he would consider it as an option. So we must keep up the pressure on the Labor Party to implement these reforms.**

**The next 12 months are very important in terms of influencing politicians of all persuasions as the state election is due in November 2014, so things will start hotting up politically over the next few months. For this reason we will be focusing strongly on developing our log of claims and distributing it widely in the public arena.**

**If you are living in private rental housing or have moved into public or social housing and you would like to join the group then please contact Marc Westley at our office on 0396547389.**

**The group has some exciting projects planned for 2014 and the more people that are involved then the bigger and better we will become!**



**The Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages working group have continued their amazing work this year, pushing forward even in a very apathetic political environment.**

**The group has been working on various projects, such as increasing media coverage and improving membership involvement, as well as starting work on submissions around the need for management standards in the sector.**

**Moving into the 2014 state election year the group are motivated to speak to politicians of all parties to raise awareness of their type of housing, and to encourage review and reform to ensure the rights of residents are properly protected and promoted.**

**Some issues the group will be looking at in 2014 will be building design, village design and utility charges especially electricity - as a starting point!**

**If you are a resident in a park or village and would like to be involved in the working group, or would like to input some of your ideas to the process, please contact Shanny Gordon on 9654 7389.**

**The first working group meeting for 2014 will be Tuesday 11 February. There are also opportunities for regional residents to become involved via teleconferences and having HAAG come out and visit.**

**The Independent Living Unit working group, made up of residents in rental ILUs and Not-for-profit retirement villages, has reformed in a slightly smaller and more focused way this year.**

**The group has been meeting since July and has been working on a project to document the differences between rights for residents under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 versus the Retirement Villages Act 1986.**

**it has been a very productive and in-depth process and the group will work towards a submission outlining why they feel there is a need for review of the state legislation. This is timely as we move towards an important year politically in 2014. There is a need to push forward more information about the not-for-profit retirement village sector as it still remains fairly invisibile in the broader sector.**

**If you are a resident of a not-for-profit retirement village or live in a rental ILU and you would like to actively work towards improved rights for residents please make contact with Shanny Gordon on 9654 7389 to find out how you can also be involved.**

## **GST charges for residential villages**

**The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has issued a proposed draft ruling stating that operators of 'moveable home estates' - also called residential villages - should be paying higher GST than they currently are.**

**Residential villages are purpose built villages made up of moveable dwellings that people will purchase as a permanent residence, and then lease/rent the site on which it stands.**

**Currently operators can opt in or out of paying GST and they receive a concessional rate of 5.5%. This has been due to the link they have with the caravan parks industry where purpose built villages have evolved from parks.**

**The ATO is saying that 'moveable home estates' are now more like retirement villages and therefore should be defined differently to caravan parks in the GST Act. Therefore they are proposing that the full 10% GST be paid by operators without being able to opt out.**

**The result of this ruling going ahead may mean a greater financial burden on residents of residential villages. Operators have been making it known that if their GST costs increase they will try and re-coup that money by increasing site fees for residents. As the majority are pensioners this could create an unsustainable living situation into the future for many people.**

**Victorian law is also inconsistent with the definitions proposed by the ATO. In Victoria all residential parks and villages are currently registered as caravan parks, and the rights of residents are all contained within the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 as tenancy arrangements.**

**Residents associations all around Australia are submitting against the ruling, as are the state and national industries. Residents groups from around Victoria are signing petitions and writing to their local Federal Members of Parliament stating why they think the ruling should not go through.**

**HAAG will also be submitting against the ruling, and is taking feedback and input from residents across the state.**

**If you would like to contribute please contact Shanny Gordon on 9654 7389 or shanny.gordon@oldertenants.org.au with your comments and petitions. Submissions must be sent in by 20 December 2013.**



**Villa Maria has released an application called 'Out and About'.**

**The application has been created for iPhone, iPad and iPod touch to assist carers and individuals with disability or mobility issues to better access their community and plan a great day out through information about accessible venues and events across metropolitan Melbourne.**

**The Out & About app enables you to choose from a range of accessibility options and different venue types.**

**Villa Maria created the Out & About app to assist people of all ages and abilities to better access their community.**

**Villa Maria thanks the Metropolitan Access Workers from many metropolitan Melbourne councils for their support in providing some of the information for this app.**

**[www.villamaria.com.au](http://www.villamaria.com.au)**

**Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) has released an application called Rentright.**

**RentRight provides information and resources for private renters, and enables tenants to communicate with landlords through email more easily.**

**Tenants can create an account based on the property they live in, and their current property manager, and can access all the information they need to understand their rights and responsibilities better.**

**[www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)**



**HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.**

1st Floor, 247-251 Flinders Lane,  
Melbourne 3000.

ADMIN: 9654 7389

Home At Last: 1300 765 178

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AUSTRALIA

**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](mailto: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](http://www.oldertenants.org.au)**