



Housing for the Aged Action Group

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PRESS RELEASE

Startling new information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics from the 2011 Census shows an alarming increase in the numbers of older people at risk of homelessness in the insecure and unaffordable private rental market.

This information will be discussed in detail at a forum called **Home at Last – The meaning of home and community for older people** being held at Victoria University in Flinders Street Melbourne on Thursday 18th April.

Jeff Fiedler from Housing for the Aged Action Group said today “The future of homeownership as a secure base for retirement is fading fast. In the last five years there has been a 44% increase in older people living in the private rental market. Less older people own their own home, more have mortgages in retirement and others are falling out of home ownership and are forced to survive in private rental housing”. Also, older people as a proportion of all private renters has increased from 8.6% in 2006 to 10.8% in 2011 so more people are in the private market who are least able to afford it or cope in older age”.

Alma Diri, a 68 year old retiree said today “I never thought this would happen to me. I had owned my own home and had to sell when my marriage broke down. After the mortgage I didn’t have much left. Then I stayed with my daughter and her family for three years but it didn’t work out as they had a growing family. From here the downward slide really happened fast and when I found myself sharing a rental house with two men I started to feel really scared and vulnerable for the first time in my life. I panicked and didn’t know what was going to happen to me”.

Joan Lamsbury, 70, had lived in 28 different rental homes since being an orphan as a child. “I lived in my last place for 12 years and was really happy. All that time I had put up with a hot water service that didn’t work and other maintenance problems but I didn’t want to complain. Then all of a sudden the landlord doubled my rent and I couldn’t afford to stay any longer. I was living on \$70 a fortnight. I got really sick when I realised I had nowhere to go” she said”.

Robert Bradshaw, 68, couldn’t afford the rent after his wife passed. “We were just managing on two pensions but all of a sudden I was paying \$1000 a month that was taking about 65% of my income. I was cutting back on food, not using the heating and became quite depressed as I stopped going out because I couldn’t afford to go anywhere. I contacted the Office of Housing and they said there was a 10 year waiting list. I had no idea where to go until someone told me about the Home at Last service. Luckily I was unwell enough to be eligible for priority into public housing” he said.

April Bragg from Home at Last at HAAG added “We are grateful that the state government has provided us with funds for a service to address this problem. However we can only help people with special health needs. Many thousands of older people may languish for years on the waiting list. The Federal Government needs to urgently build more public housing or this crisis will continue to worsen. They need to understand that rental housing has become a mainstream option for people. As a society we need to decide if this means being exploited, in poverty and poor health in the private market or ensuring that good quality, affordable housing as we age is a right”.

For more information contact Jeff Fiedler on 0417117232 or April Bragg on 0417581510.