



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

A guide for participating and volunteering with Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG)



We acknowledge the people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians and pay our respects to their culture and their Elders past, present and emerging.

Thank you for your interest in participating in our organisation. There are different ways for you to get involved, ranging from participation in working groups to more formal volunteering roles.

Before you start in one of our roles, please read this guide to make sure our organisation is the right fit for you:

HAAG's Vision

A society where older people have secure, safe & affordable housing

HAAG's Mission

We engage and work with older people through community activism, services & advocacy to achieve social change and housing justice

HAAG Guiding Values & Behaviours

The way we work and the behaviours which demonstrate that we mean what we say:

Inclusiveness, Commitment, Respect, Integrity, Solidarity, Equity

Overview of HAAG

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) is a grass roots organisation committed to finding long term solutions to the housing crisis facing older people in Australia. HAAG works with older people to shape our service, engage with the community, raise awareness, and in policy and advocacy.

HAAG fights against age and gender discrimination, and we have a zero tolerance towards discrimination. We recognise the rights of all workers, members and clients to be free from all forms of discrimination and harassment regardless of their ethnicity, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex variation or religious beliefs. We have achieved Rainbow Tick Accreditation to create a safer and more inclusive workplace for all.

HAAG acknowledges that we mainly work on the traditional land of the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations and offer our respects to elders, past and present. We recognise and respect the cultural heritage of this land and other lands where we live, learn and work.

HAAG works in partnership with specialist homelessness services, the aged care sector, community sector organisations, advocates and all layers of government to raise awareness of the unique risk of homelessness experienced by older people. We provide advice and information about pathways for support and housing options.

To achieve our vision of a society where older people have secure, safe and affordable housing, we work with older people through community activism, services and advocacy to achieve social change and housing justice.

For more information about HAAG, ask employees for copies of the following recommended reading or look on our website www.older tenants.org.au

Recommended reading:

- Housing for the Aged Action Group brochure
- Home at Last brochure
- Booklet: *Finding at Home: Housing options for older people in Victoria*
- Our most recent *Older Tenants Voice*
- Our most recent *Annual Report*
- Check under 'Reports' in our publications file on the HAAG website for relevant HAAG publications

Recommended viewing:

- DVD: *Home at Last: Looking for home – Finding Community*
<https://www.older tenants.org.au/publications/home-last-looking-for-home-finding-community>
- Our Youtube channel has lots of other videos about our work, including our advocacy
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgdNKxDzlanLqMUcnPH79_Q



Celebrating volunteers at our end of year Volunteers Lunch 2018

Introduction

Older people are a valued and essential part of HAAG and over the years, and they have helped ensure our ongoing success. For this reason, engaging older people, including those with a lived experience of homelessness, continues to be a key aspect of our work. At HAAG, we believe elevating the voices of older people not only honours our heritage, it provides a foundational pillar for all that we do.

HAAG client and member views, opinions, needs and experience are heard throughout the organisation. Older people with lived experience of homelessness, housing stress and living in retirement housing hold leadership positions on our Committee of Management. Members and clients provide ongoing advice and feedback on service delivery and advocacy through reference groups, general meetings, surveys and evaluations.

There are several ways to get involved, including participating in reference groups, providing peer or community education, assisting older people to navigate the aged care system, or offering administrative support in our office. A full list of options is provided in this guide.

Recently, our volunteer program was aligned with Volunteer Australia's national standards. We want volunteers to feel supported in their roles and recognised for the significant contributions they make. As part of this, we seek to provide volunteer opportunities that are meaningful and allow volunteers to remain active and socially engaged.



What you can expect at HAAG

HAAG recognises that volunteers are not covered by awards or workplace agreements. However, volunteers do have rights and protection under the law, and you can expect us to uphold them. When volunteering at HAAG, we recognise your right:

- To work in a healthy and safe environment and be adequately covered by insurance
- To be recruited and selected for a volunteer role in line with equal employment and anti-discrimination legislation
- To be given accurate and truthful information about the organisation, including access to HAAG's volunteer policy and any other policy relevant to your role
- To a clear role outline and agreed upon hours; and for the volunteer role not to be one previously held by a paid worker
- To an induction to the organisation, as well as sufficient training to carry out the role
- To be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses
- For personal information to be handled in line with the principles of the Privacy Act 1988
- To know about and have access to the organisation's feedback and grievance systems
- To be recognised for any contributions made to the organisation

What we ask of volunteers

At HAAG, we ask that volunteers:

- Commit to the volunteer role and support HAAG's aims and objectives.
- Notify in advance any changes to your availability, including no longer wishing to volunteer
- Follow organisational policies and procedures
- Respect the rights and privacy of others
- Carry out the tasks and duties as described in your role outline and ask for support if needed
- Manage feedback and complaints in a respectful and appropriate manner and following organisational procedures.
- If you notice any potential hazards or dangerous situations whilst volunteering at the organisation, notify employees at HAAG immediately or as soon as you can.

Diversity and Inclusion Statement



HAAG recognises that volunteers, much like our clients, come from diverse backgrounds and we value the contribution that this diversity brings to our organisation. We also acknowledge that the history of formal volunteering in Australia is rooted in colonialism and an Anglo-centric viewpoint, creating inequity and barriers to participation that still exist today.

As a community-led organisation, HAAG is committed to the principles of social justice and aims to ensure every individual is treated with dignity and respect regardless of their age, cultural background, ability, ethnicity, gender identity, intersex variation, sexual orientation or religious beliefs. We seek to remove barriers to participation, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups, and we strongly encourage expressions of interest in our volunteer roles from older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people who identify as LGBTI+.

We ask that all volunteers and employees treat each other and those we work with in an inclusive way. Training is provided during induction to support an understanding of diversity and what being inclusive looks like. Volunteers, members of working groups, students and employees are also asked to read and agree to our Code of Conduct policy. This is so we can create a workplace where everyone can participate fully and safely.





What kinds of volunteer roles are there?

There are a variety of roles for volunteers at HAAG, and these roles continually change to fit our work focus and the levels of participation that older people wish to engage in at HAAG. Current volunteer and participation opportunities are listed below, however, if none of these are of interest, and you are still keen to work towards HAAG's vision of a society, where older people have access to safe, secure and affordable housing, then please contact us to discuss other potential opportunities.

Aged Care Systems Navigator Project

The Aged Care Systems Navigator is a national trial testing different models of support to help people understand and engage with the aged care system. The project recognises that because the aged care system is complex and difficult to navigate, not all people eligible for My Aged Care are accessing support. This is particularly true for people who are or have been homeless, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTI communities and those with disabilities and other barriers to access.

The project first began in 2019, in partnership with Council on the Ageing (COTA) and several other agencies and has funding until 2021

HAAG has several volunteer roles in relation to this project. These are: Aged Care Navigators (Home Visits); Aged Care Navigators (In Office Assistance); Community Educators.

Community Educators - Housing options and supports

In this volunteer role, HAAG seeks people willing to deliver community education to older people at risk of homelessness; as well as to organisations working with older people who may be at risk. HAAG seeks to raise awareness of this public health issue and provide pathways to support that will prevent older people from reaching crisis point. As part of the role, Community Educators will collaborate with Peer Educators, who will share their personal stories at community education sessions, to help reach older people in similar circumstances.

Ideally, volunteers for this role will have experience working in the community services sector. For further information, please request a role outline.

Peer Educators

In this volunteer role, HAAG seeks older people with a lived experience of homelessness or having been at risk of homelessness, who are willing to use their life experience to raise awareness of this public health issue within the community. As part of the role, Peer Educators will be asked to share their personal stories at community education sessions and in media settings, so that they may reach others experiencing similar circumstances and help them find pathways to support. Volunteers in this role will receive specialised training. For further information, please request a role outline.

Cultural Diversity Reference Group: Community Advocates

HAAG Community Advocates are trained, bilingual community leaders who act as contact points within their community. They share information about HAAG and the Home at Last service. As part of their role they recognise when a person needs help with housing and, with their consent, make a referral to Home at Last via a single, nominated worker. Community advocates are also members of the HAAG cultural diversity reference group.

Working groups

HAAG has several working groups where people can participate as members. These are not “formal” volunteer roles, as they do not have a role description or a volunteer supervisor, and we do not expect you to provide us with Police Checks or Working with Children’s Checks. However, we ask that you sign up as a member of HAAG and sign our Code of Conduct, as minimum requirement to participate. Working groups are led by paid staff members, and are governed by Terms of Reference. You may be reimbursed for your time as a participant, similar to a “sitting fee”. This is to reduce barriers to participation, and is not a wage.

Cultural Diversity Reference Group: Group members

The Cultural Diversity Reference Group advocates for the housing and service-use needs of identified communities, as well as the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities more broadly. The Reference Group provides a forum for Community Advocates to share information about community needs, gaps in service provision and experiences using the Home at Last service. The forum also provides an opportunity for HAAG to share information about the ever-changing Victorian housing system, housing options and any new initiatives. The group meets monthly.

Retirement Accommodation Action Group (RAAG)

The Retirement Accommodation Action group (RAAG) is made up of residents from all forms of retirement villages and exists to lobby, advocate and promote the right to live in retirement accommodation that is safe, affordable, accessible, and fair. Older people living in various retirement accommodations are vulnerable to infringements of their rights, finances, safety, and quality of life through lack of protections, legislation, complaints processes, or mediation and resolution processes. This group has a strong history of achievement at HAAG, see website for details <https://www.older tenants.org.au/retirement-housing>

National Alliance Seniors Housing (NASH)

The National Alliance for Senior's Housing (NASH) was formed in early 2019 to bring together older people from across Australia who have experienced homelessness, are at risk of homelessness or in housing stress. The group aims to raise awareness of these experiences and advocate for the housing and service-use needs of financially disadvantaged older people. To ensure we have a greater representative spread of people across Australia, and given the service provided by HAAG in Victoria, NASH members are mainly from states and territories other than Victoria.

NASH has an organising committee that meets regularly, as well as a larger membership who are engaged for state or Federal advocacy.

LGBTI Reference Group

We have an active LGBTI community reference group who help develop and deliver community education to the LGBTI community.

Volunteer workplace safety and wellbeing

As an organisation committed to providing a safe, healthy, and inclusive workplace, HAAG has several systems in place. This includes a Code of Conduct; Occupational Health and Safety policy; Diversity policy; Anti-discrimination and Racism policy; and associated procedures for each of these policy areas. Volunteers will be asked to read and adhere to all HAAG policies and procedures and will need to sign a copy of our Code of Conduct, as well as a Volunteer Agreement that states you agree to follow these policies and procedures.

Background and Personal Reference Checks

HAAG asks that all volunteers to undergo police background and Working with Children checks to ensure the safety of all at HAAG, particularly our clients. Volunteers only need to provide this information following an initial meeting or interview and the costs are covered by HAAG. Any personal information collected is treated as sensitive and handled in accordance with privacy laws. Volunteers can request a copy of our *Privacy Policy*. It should be noted that having a police record doesn't mean a volunteer won't be considered for a role.

In some circumstances, personal reference checks may be required. If so, volunteers will be asked to provide contact details for at least one referee who knows them well and can provide some indication as to whether the volunteer would be suitable for the role. Personal referees can include close friends, a relative, or a current or former employer.

Working group participants do not need to provide a police check and working with children check, as they are not in "formal" volunteer roles. However, they are required to sign and agree to a Code of Conduct.

Insurance

HAAG provides insurance cover for all volunteers, so they are adequately protected whilst engaging in volunteer activities at HAAG.

Employee Assistance Program

If required, volunteers can access three sessions of free counselling support through the Employee Assistance Program. Please speak to your volunteer supervisor to discuss this.

Volunteer support and development

Induction

At HAAG we want volunteers to feel valued and supported, which is why all volunteers go through an induction to help familiarise them with the organisation and their role. An induction includes introductions to other volunteers and employees; a tour of the office and building; information on HAAG's OH&S policies and procedures; and the completion of mandatory training. It also includes being supported by a supervisor in learning the duties and responsibilities of the volunteer role.

Probationary period and ongoing support

All formal volunteer roles are subject to a three-month probationary period. Supervisors will regularly meet with volunteers to provide feedback on how volunteers are doing and for volunteers to provide feedback on how they are finding the role. These meetings provide the opportunity to identify any areas where the volunteer may need support and to put that support in place. Reviews will be held 3-months after starting in the role and annually to assess progress and identify any further support or developmental needs. Any changes to the activities or role of a volunteer will be undertaken fairly and consistently.

Training and Development

At HAAG, we want volunteers to find the tasks and activities they are involved in both satisfying and meaningful. We also want to provide opportunities for volunteers to expand on their skills, so where possible, we will provide volunteers with opportunities for training and further development relevant to their role. It should be noted that extended training is provided for the peer educator and community educator roles, as training is considered an essential part of undertaking these roles due to the specific nature of the activities involved. These training opportunities are clearly highlighted in the relevant volunteer role outlines. All volunteers and employees are required to participate in diversity and inclusion training.



Volunteer benefits and recognition

The contribution volunteers make to HAAG is enormous and volunteers have been an integral part of our organisation since HAAG first began in 1983. Volunteers, particularly older people, are at the core of all the work we do in seeking systemic change around homelessness and housing issues experienced by older people in Australia. As such we have several ways of recognising volunteers and the impact they have on our organisation.

Acknowledgements and Feedback

At HAAG, we will take every opportunity to provide volunteers with feedback on how their involvement positively contributes to the work we do. This includes providing direct feedback in meetings; written acknowledgements in our reports, publications, newsletter, website, and social media channels; via conversation on our radio program – ‘Raise the Roof’; through certificates awarded for completion of training; or during planned events to celebrate occasions, such as Volunteers Week.

Reimbursements

HAAG also recognises that many of our volunteers bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experience to their roles, including a lived experience of homelessness and cultural knowledge from diverse backgrounds. Such knowledge and experience are vital to our organisation, and acknowledgement of this is reflected in the generous reimbursement rates HAAG provides in line with sector recommendations.

For further information, please request a copy of our Paid Participation policy.

Feedback, Compliments and Complaints

HAAG has systems in place for providing feedback and complaints. Should any volunteer wish to do so whilst volunteering at HAAG, these can be provided directly to their assigned supervisor, to the *Executive Officer* at HAAG; or online, via a feedback form on the HAAG website:

<https://www.older tenants.org.au/feedback>

The process for providing feedback or making a complaint is also covered as part of any volunteer's induction and assistance can be provided if needed.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if in my volunteer role someone asks for information I don't know?

It is likely that you will always be working with an employee or have one close by. Never answer a question if you don't know the answer, just tell the person you will get back to them, take their contact details and an employee will help you answer the question or contact the person as soon as possible.



What if someone I encounter gets upset or is difficult?

Many people experiencing housing stress can feel very vulnerable and become upset when they speak about their situation. This is a perfectly normal response to a difficult situation. You do not need to fix anything for them. Give them reassurance and call an employee.

Can I do my mutual obligation volunteering hours as part of HAAG volunteering?

We do not support “work for the dole” schemes as they neither increase people’s chances of employment nor create jobs. If anything, this practice undermines the pay and conditions of other workers.

However, if you are on Jobseeker, we are happy to provide the details of the casual volunteering you do at HAAG to your Job Support worker.

How many hours can I volunteer at HAAG?

Volunteering at HAAG is usually on a casual basis or based on project requirements. We usually don't expect a volunteer to work for more than 2 hours at a time, once a week or once a fortnight.

Volunteer Application Form

If you would like to volunteer, please complete the following application [form online](#) or by printing and mailing us a copy of the form below.



2.05F - Volunteer With HAAG

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Preferred Pronouns

How to you prefer people to refer to you?

Select an option

I want to help with mail-outs

- Help post out newsletters and information to our members

I want to help with office work

- Help out the team with tasks such as scanning, filing, cleaning and data entry.

I want to help staff an information stall

- Help the team out with a stall at events such as Seniors week.

I want to provide feedback to improve the service

- Join the Client's Voice team of current and previous clients of Home at Last

I want to talk to groups about housing or aged care

- Talking to community groups about housing options and aged care.

We provide training.

One on one support

- Giving people information and support about aged care over the phone, in the office, or at their home. We provide training.

I'm interested to be part of a Working Group

- Join the Retirement Accommodation Action Group, the Cultural Diversity Reference Group, or the LGBTI Reference Group.

I'm interested to be part of the Committee of Management

- Be elected to our Committee of Management to provide governance and guidance to HAAG.

Other ways I'd like to help out

Please state:

Other skills I'd like to share

Please state:

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