HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

Older Tenants' Voice

Since 1988

Housing—A right not a privilege



Autumn Edition March 2013

HAAG is on radio 3CR
'Raise the Roof'
4th Wednesday of each month at 6pm
27 March - 24 April - 22 May

HOME
at last

To All HAAG Members...



As this is our first newsletter for 2013 may I say a happy and healthy New Year.

Would you believe it is 12 months since the Department of Human Services funded the Home at Last project? What an exceptional year it has been.

Congratulations to all staff achieving the best possible results for this project.

From a personal point of view it has been a most exciting and inspiring time.

Upcoming events for March are a general meeting for all HAAG members (details further inside).

For April a Home at Last forum will be held which is free for HAAG members.

I am looking forward to another busy and exciting time as Chairperson in 2013.

Wyn Stenton



If you have any stories, news or items you wish to share with us at HAAG please send or email them in for our June newsletter. Details are on the back page.

Making a Difference: Housing for the Aged Action Group's invaluable Members and Volunteers

Mary (Molly) Hadfield OAM was the founding member of Housing for the Aged Action Group, which was formed in 1983 to ensure the right of all Victorians to a decent home. While Molly sadly passed away in November 2012, her legacy lives on in the work of Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) and the many other organisations for which Molly's passionate activism was a core component. Now, almost 30 years after its inception, HAAG is providing housing services to more older Victorians than ever before. With a focus on assisting private renters and those in other forms of insecure housing such as boarding houses, HAAG's Department of Human Services funded project, '**Home at Last'**, has already helped hundreds of older people to find secure, affordable and appropriate housing.

But none of this work could have been done without HAAG's strong base of more than 400 members and volunteers. HAAG's members and volunteers are mostly people who have experienced housing hardship in the past and who share a commitment to "making a difference" in the lives of older people who are going through what they themselves experienced.

Our members and volunteers go above and beyond when it comes to their work at HAAG.

A month ago a HAAG member kindly donated 8 beautifully handwoven quilts for us to give to people we were assisting to find affordable housing. **Home at Last** Housing Support Worker Melis Cevik said that the people she assisted expressed amazement that someone would donate such beautifully crafted hand made quilts. One client said, "When I held the quilt, I felt the love of the person who made it", and another, "I am so grateful, I am sure this one is made just for me, I loved the colours".

Similarly, HAAG's Chairperson , Wyn, recently spoke to her local doctor about how **Home at Last** can help older people who are worried about their housing by providing tenancy advice, retirement housing support and advice and general information about their housing options. Wyn hopes to continue this important work by speaking to all of the doctors in her area about how **Home at Last** has helped her and can help others. Wyn said that, "As a member of Housing for the Aged Action Group, I am working towards making sure that all older people can live a comfortable, secure, affordable life in their senior years".

Another long-standing HAAG member always picks up a bunch of **Home at Last** brochures when she comes into the office. She likes to leave them on the seats of trams and trains so that more people can learn about the service.

Housing for the Aged Action group is thankful to its members and volunteers for how they 'make a difference' in the lives older Victorians who are struggling in private rental housing or living in insecure housing.

If you are interested in becoming a HAAG member, or assisting as a volunteer, please call 9654 7389.

If you are interested in organising a community education session about HAAG's services or about housing options, or both, please contact our community education team on 9654 7389.

Sessions are available for service providers and seniors groups and can be tailored to your needs.



Community Education travelled to Bendigo (left), and Ballarat this quarter with more regional visits to come, such as: Echuca, Gippsland region, Swan Hill and Wodonga.

Our faithful volunteers and members giving their time to assist us with mail outs. (right) THANK YOU to all who have participated so far this year!





Caravan and Residential Parks and Villages working group Xmas party (left).

Thank you for your time and dedication to sharing your voice as residents.

Living in a Retirement Village

For years I had lived in Rental Accommodation. Affordable rent was always in a privately owned property. Security of tenure was on a yearly basis. Several times it was my unhappy experience to have to move because the then current property was being put up for sale.

A move interstate to live with a family member proved untenable.

I returned to Victoria and sought help through HAAG where I received the most courteous attention and well-considered advise for which I will ever be grateful. I was also given a catalogue containing a list of all types of accommodation. This I perused at length.

Meanwhile – back to private renting with no guarantee that the Granny Flat I'd moved into would not also end up with a For Sale notice board erected.

Countless questions waged battle in my mind as I seriously pondered the fast approaching need to enter a Retirement Village. The thought of surrendering my independence was top of the list – closely followed by privacy issues.

Knowing that it was time to take responsibility for my future so that I did not become a concern for my family, I reluctantly put my name down at a village serving an area with which I was completely familiar.

All too quickly – or so it seemed – I received notification that a unit would be available in the next little while. I agonized over it and hoped for a " stay of execution" – up until the day I moved in. Again, HAAG was there to help, advise and encourage me.

My fears were groundless! Once the unpacking was done and I could see daylight, to my absolute joy I made the wonderful discovery that this lifestyle was going to afford me all and more than I could possibly have hoped for. Added to that, I have total independence (no different from living in a suburban house) and all the privacy I could want. Delightful neighbours who are friendly but respect my privacy as I do theirs. The property is secure, so too each individual unit. An air of contentment pervades the village. There is freedom to come and go and no restrictions.

There are occasions when something is on in the community room and to which all residents are invited but attendance is a matter of choice.

Much more could be written to add positive spin but suffice to say it really has turned out to be one of my better choices in life. Periodic re-location is a thing of the past.

Lesley



Young people have theirs, now Seniors have their own texting codes:

- ATD - At the Doctor's
- BFF - Best Friends Funeral
- BTW - Bring the Wheelchair
- BYOT - Bring your own Teeth
- CBM - Covered by Medicare
- CUATSC - See you at the Senior Centre
- DWI - Driving While Incontinent
- FWIW - Forgot Where I Was
- GGPBL - Gotta Go, Pacemaker Battery Low
- GHA - Got Heartburn Again
- HGBM - Had Good Bowel Movement
- LMDO - Laughing my Dentures Out
- LOL - Living on Lipitor
- OMSG - Oh My! Sorry, Gas
- TOT - Texting on Toilet
- WAITT - Who Am I Talking To?
- WTF - Wow That's Funny
- GGLKI - Gotta Go, Laxative Kicking in!

From an email sent in by a HAAG member!

LORD MAYOR'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

HAAG has been awarded a $5000 grant through the Lord Mayor's charitable fund for the 'Home At Last Relocation project'.

This project assists people financially to establish themselves in their new home, whether through removal and packing costs, rent in advance or storage fees.

HAAG thanks the Foundation for their support!

HAAG GENERAL MEETING

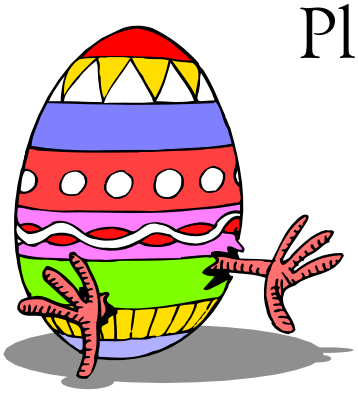
Thursday 28 March
1:30pm till 3pm

Public Housing, Home at Last and other areas of interest

HAAG's upcoming general meeting will discuss the future viability of public housing and the State Government's proposal for managing housing differently.
Other areas of interest to be discussed will be the Home at Last service, as well as other work being undertaken by HAAG.

We value the input of our Members and
hope to see you on the day.

Please RSVP by Friday 22 March



Easter Eggs and Hot Cross Buns provided!

Submissions:

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) Regulatory Impact Statement

VCAT produced a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) in January proposing to increase VCAT fees in relation to applications, hearings and dispute resolution sessions, and was asking for submissions to be made in response to their four proposed options.

The Tribunal was created to provide access to justice for those on low incomes, without requiring all of the detailed legal supports higher courts require. That being said the RIS makes it clear VCAT is trying to compare itself to the very courts it was created to vary from, saying that according to cost expenditure they require a system that is more in line with user pays.

VCAT is clear that the proposals in the RIS are based on feedback from Members' experiences of the time, resources and costs involved in the day-to-day functioning of the Tribunal, as well as the increasing complexity of cases. They also state though that they have poor data analysis. To this they say that up until the next review of the VCAT regulations (in 2016) they will gather proper data to be able to make more accurate assessments of the cost recovery required into the future.

The four options proposed in the RIs are to keep costs as they are until the next review, to provide for increases of 30% cost recovery, to provide increases of %45 cost recovery or to tier the cost recovery starting at %30 in the first year and gradually up each year to %45 in the third.

HAAG recommended that fees stay as they are due to the concern any increases would deter older tenants and residents from taking matters to VCAT.

Up until now under the Residential Tenancies List tenants applications only make up a very small percentage and yet as a trust-funded list their bonds pay for VCAT's associated costs.

Under the appropriation-funded lists, specifically the Civil Claims List where retirement village matters are heard, retirement village residents as applicants make an even smaller number again.

Although pension waivers are available many older people do not know this and the RIS failed to mention whether pension waivers would apply to all increases, particularly where it was indicated parties would have to split costs.

We have yet to hear what the outcomes of the submissions are but we will keep our members updated on any progress.

Since April 2012 HAAG has been developing a brand new service called **Home at Last – Older Persons Housing Information and Support Service**. **Home at Last** is a new state-wide initiative and is one of eleven Homelessness Innovation Action Projects funded by the Victorian Government as part of its Homelessness Action Plan. The aim of all of the Innovation Action Projects is to develop prevention and early intervention strategies that achieve long term housing outcomes for vulnerable Victorians.

The focus of the **Home at Last** service is to assist thousands of older Victorians who are at risk of homelessness, particularly those struggling to survive in the private rental market. Private rental housing is a problem for older people as it is often insecure, unaffordable on an aged pension and difficult to adapt as people age. Over the first 8-9 months of the service Home at Last has assisted over 1000 older people with housing assistance, with steady increases in numbers of people each month the service has operated.

181 clients have been managed directly by our Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) service with another 296 people being assisted by other agencies where more local support is appropriate. Most importantly 68 people have been helped directly by Home at Last from precarious private rental housing and into long term public (25) and social housing (35) with a smaller number of people assisted to move into other long term housing options such as independent living units.

Home at Last has been funded initially for a 12 month period until June 2013. It will soon be evaluated by the Department of Human Services to decide whether it warrants continuation. We know from the demand for assistance so far and the projected need for affordable housing in the future based on increasing numbers of people reaching retirement who do not have secure housing, that Home at Last is an important service that will be needed for decades to come.

If you or anyone you know needs housing assistance please call Home at Last on 1300 765 178.

HOME AT LAST FORUM

As well as developing a new service HAAG is also holding a Home at Last Forum to highlight the problem of older people at risk of homelessness. **The forum will be held on Thursday 18th April from 9.30am to 2.30pm at Victoria University in Flinders Street Melbourne**. This event has been organised to provide information to the wider community as well as housing, aged care and community agencies about the issues facing older people at risk of homelessness. The forum will present the latest research and discuss progress of the Home at Last-Older Persons Housing Information & Support Service, a Homelessness Innovations Action Project funded by the Victorian Government. The forum will also hear directly from a panel of older people and view a short film on how a secure and affordable home creates individual health and well-being and builds strong communities.

Guest speakers for the day include Dr. Maree Petersen from the University of Queensland who will present a talk called 'Tackling older persons homelessness' and Dr. Shelley Mallett from Hanover Welfare Services will speak on 'Gender and location factors that cause homelessness amongst older people'.

See more information on our website at www.oldertenants.org.au or contact the HAAG office on 0396547389 and we can send you a flier with all the information. Cost to attend the forum is $50 for people working in funded agencies and free for HAAG members and people on aged pensions.

You can register to attend by filling in the enclosed registration sheet.

PILCH = Public Interest Law Clearing House

PILCH conducts 2 legal assistance outreach clinics: the Seniors' Rights Legal Clinic (SRLC) and the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic (HPLC).

The PILCH Seniors' Rights Legal Clinic (SRLC) is a specialist legal service for older people, designed to respond to and prevent elder abuse from occurring and assist with legal issues associated with ageing. Elder abuse is where a person in a relationship of trust to the older person behaves in a way that causes harm to the older person. This includes physical, emotional or financial harm, behaving in a threatening or coercive way, or trying to control or dominate the older person causing them to feel fear for their safety. Elder abuse is a hidden problem within the community. People are often reluctant to report elder abuse or confront the possibility that they might even be subject to that abuse by a loved one.

We provide legal services at four outreach locations across Metropolitan Melbourne at Caulfield Hospital, Bundoora Extended Care Centre, Western Regiona Health Centre and Doutta Galla Community Health Niddrie for older people who cannot afford to pay for a private lawyer. The kinds of legal matters that we can assist with include:

- Financial elder abuse.
- Guardianship and Administration matters
- Powers of Attorney
- Centrelink issues
- Grandparenting issues
- Housing
- Discrimination

In addition to the SRLC, PILCH also runs the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic (HPLC). The HPLC is a specialist legal service that provides free legal assistance and advocacy to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We have outreach legal clinics at a number of locations, including central Melbourne, North Melbourne, West Melbourne, Collingwood, St Kilda and Geelong.

The kinds of legal matters that the HPLC can assist with include:

- Housing and tenancy
- Fines and infringement notices for public space offences
- Centrelink issues
- Credit and debt
- Guardianship and administration
- Discrimination
- Human rights

To find out more about how to access our clinics or to get an appointment to see our lawyers, please call 1800 606 313 or 8636 4408

Support Service for Forgotten Australians

OPEN PLACE
Support Service for Forgotten Australians

Hello everyone and thank you to Home at Last for the opportunity to let you know about *Open Place*.

Open Place is a Victorian Government funded service specifically for 'Forgotten Australians'. The term 'Forgotten Australian' refers to the men and women, who as children were placed in orphanages and Homes during the last century. We also support Child Migrants and the Stolen Generation. *Open Place* represents the Victorian Government's commitment to deliver support services that advocate and improve the circumstances of 'Forgotten Australians'. It is believed that there might be as many as 500,000 'Forgotten Australians'.

We have a number of services available including counselling, limited financial assistance to access dental, specialist health and medical services. 'Forgotten Australians' who were in 'care' in Victoria are eligible for counselling in their local area at no cost. We also assist people to access their records from their time in institutional care, such as obtaining Wardship Orders and other identification. We can also assist 'Forgotten Australians' trace family members and provide support to meet them for the first time.

Open Place assists 'Forgotten Australians' through opportunities to meet other 'Forgotten Australians' via Social Support groups. We have a number of groups around the State that meet monthly including Geelong, Sale, Shepparton, Bacchus Marsh, Dandenong, Preston and Frankston. The groups arrange activities such as Morning Melodies and outings such as visiting Healesville Sanctuary.

We are a State wide service and also provide personal support and referral s to other support services depending on what people need. There is a Newsletter that comes out every 3 months.

We find that a pressing issue for a lot of 'Forgotten Australian's' at this time as they age ,is health, such as dental and optical needs and housing. *Open Place* assists people access suitable and affordable housing by making referrals to aged care facilities or community housing providers and completing Office of Housing Applications.

Open Place provides support and advocacy to 'Forgotten Australians' and their families living in Victoria or elsewhere.

We have a toll free number

1800 779 379 or

03 9421 6162.

If you think you might be eligible for our service we would love to hear from you.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.
1st Floor, 247-251 Flinders Lane,
Melbourne 3000.
ADMIN: 9654 7389
Home At Last: 1300 765 178

SURFACE

POSTAGE PAID AUSTRALIA

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

<u>There are four main aspects to our service:</u>

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

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

haag
HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP INC.

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