



older tenants voice

Housing for the Aged Action Groups Quarterly Newsletter Winter 2019



HOUSING FOR THE AGED ACTION GROUP

FIGHTING FOR HOUSING JUSTICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1983





Hello dear members,
We had a most enjoyable General Meeting on May 23rd and we celebrated Volunteers week with Certificates of Appreciation to HAAG volunteers who do so much good work every week.

HAAG has many volunteers ranging from those who devote their time with the Committee of Management to those who are translators with our CALD unit for seniors who don't have English as their first language and who need help to find housing. We also have volunteers who do invaluable office tasks with data updating and memberships detailing updates, to name just a few tasks.

The members who began as happily housed HAAG clients now volunteer as peer educators for the newest numbers of seniors at risk of homelessness who are being assisted into housing with information and care. Volunteers like Guru with his camera at all events and his professional attention to providing pictures for HAAG social media are so appreciated always. The volunteers who work along side HAAG staff weekly in the office also lend their help whenever there is an outdoor promotional event for what we do. Thank you to all and every one of the HAAG volunteers.

Volunteering is summed up perfectly by Hugh Mackay, the Australian social scientist and author as: 'The lack of compassion is a health hazard. If we lose sight of our true nature as a member of a community without regard for the needs and well being of others we may invite erosion of our compassion and the corresponding threat to our mental health.'

In the words of Volunteering Victoria this year 'Volunteering is a fulfilling way to give back to your community helping others makes you feel great in return'.

Yours Sincerely, Phyll Williams

LETTER TO THE EDITOR— "LIFE IS A NUMBERS GAME"

As a senior citizen, I would like to thank and congratulate HAAG for fighting for housing justice of older people since 1983. That is 35 years amongst friends. However, even hard working organizations like HAAG can only be truly effective if their numbers can effect the outcome of a state or federal election. Collecting a few hundred signatures on a petition is usually not enough! However, collecting 3 or 4 thousand signatures could unseat several state or Federal MPs. Therefore, the relevant government would take notice! I believe, all/most senior citizens should be financial members of HAAG! That way, I believe the HAAG administration could do even more and better for its members. Sincerely, Steve Raskovy

Our General Meeting on the 23rd of May during National Volunteer Week provided a perfect opportunity for HAAG to acknowledge the help and support provided to us by our wonderful volunteers and to say 'thank you' for their invaluable contributions.



From general office volunteers to peer educators, there are a variety of Volunteer roles at HAAG and every hour from every volunteer is making a difference.

General office volunteers: come into the HAAG office and help the team out with a range of office based activities such as help with mail outs, scanning, filing, cleaning and data entry.

Aged care system navigator volunteers: both our In-office and Home visit provide information about the Aged Care System, and offer one-on-one assistance to clients to register with My Aged Care and access the services they need.

Working groups: HAAG convenes a number of member based working groups to discuss various issues about housing and older people, including the Cultural Diversity Reference Group, Retirement Accommodation Action Group and the National Alliance of Seniors for Housing

Peer educators: use their lived experience to build awareness of the issue of homelessness among older people within the community.

Community educators: deliver information about Housing Options and Aged Care to groups within the community.

To find out more about these roles and how you can contribute to the work at HAAG, visit: www.older tenants.org.au/volunteer or call (03) 9654 7389





During National Volunteer Week we talked with June Wilkinson, one of our longest standing volunteers about the patchwork quilts she makes for our clients, on our radio show Raise the Roof. Here is an edited transcript, you can tune in to catch up on all the old shows at

oldertenants.org.au/podcasts



Could you tell us about what you do for our clients?

For HAAG I do patchwork quilts. I have probably done about 200. I started off doing them for family and they all got one each and I thought that's enough, I am not doubling up and no one else is getting one so I was involved with HAAG and at the time asked if they could use them. From then it just went. I have one standard pattern that I use now, which makes it quicker and easier, I sew them all together, I do all the squares and lay them out, try to make them as symmetrical as I can and then I machine them. Then I put them together with the wadding and the backing then I hand stitch, which takes quite a bit of time. I could make one in a whole day. If I get it started early in the morning, I could finish it by night. I don't always stay at it for that length of time. Sometimes, I get better offers, like 'would you like to go up the street for a cup of coffee?' They fit across a double bed, but they make wonderful knee rugs or to go on the back of a couch.

So why did you want to start doing it?

To want to help the people. I went and saw a couple of DVD's in at HAAG and it was very sad and I thought gee these people need help and every little bit helps of course.

Is there anything you would be saying to our listeners about volunteering like this?

'Well I would like to see more people do it. I am sure there are a lot of people who have just got as much time as I have and they don't do anything, which is sad really. I suppose it's not fair to say that because I do it somebody else should but I just get so much enjoyment out of it. It fills in a day,'

Our clients certainly get as much enjoyment out of it as well... They are so appreciative and they just can't believe that someone has actually handmade a quilt for them .



We also talked with our volunteer Sara Simon about how she got involved with HAAG

Can you tell us how you found out about Housing for the Aged Action Group?

I was watching a program last year and the year before called 'Filthy Rich and Homeless' and the last years' program affected me because that's when I found out what an epidemic there is in women over 50 who are homeless. So I started to do some research and I found out HAAG

What made you want to volunteer?

I volunteered for 5 years with the RSPCA and I thought I could deal with humans again!

What's the sort of things that you do in the office?

I am everybody's dogsbody. Which is fabulous because there are things that need to get done in an office that there isn't enough time for everybody to do and I am more than happy to take on those roles of cutting out little bits of paper and sticking things, whatever is asked of me.

What's your professional background? What did you do in your working life?

I've had a few lives. I was in retail for a long time and I actually had a café/deli in Acland Street. Then I decided to go into the office environment and did a computer course. I have done lots of work as an Executive Assistant or a Personal Assistant and also at doing all the finance and admin in schools.'

You are great at that admin stuff and we love it. It's National Volunteer Week, is there anything you would like to say to our listeners about volunteering in particular, is there anything that you would recommend volunteering, what would you say?

'I'd say it brings a lot of satisfaction. I'm retired so I have a lot of time on my hands and it makes me feel as though I am wanted and valued and it's helping in areas that people need help.



Libby Heath and Sara Simon



Gemma White and Susan McQueen

We also talked with Susan McQueen who has been volunteering in our office and as part of the Aged Care Service Navigator Project

What sort of things do you do when you are volunteering here?

I've opted to do some office based work and that's been really interesting. It's involved looking at the membership database. I have also volunteered with the 'Aged Care Service Navigator' trial and that involves some really interesting training so I had the benefit from participating in that training so I have learnt an awful lot. From that I hope to be able to provide support to people coming in who want to access 'my aged care' so I am looking forward to that role very much.

Professionally when you were in the workforce, what was your background?

I'm a registered nurse and worked mainly in the community as a community nurse in mental health and in aged care. When I finished that role, I moved into research for many years.

Are you retired now or semi working?

'I'm not saying that I'm retired, but I did finish work over a year ago and really thinking about what else I would like to do. I thought a great way to fill in some time, I suppose and contribute would be doing some volunteer work for HAAG and so far it's been a terrific experience.'

So you have heaps of skills to offer HAAG.

Well I am used to working with people in the community and people from all sorts of backgrounds and abilities and I suppose that does fit with HAAG.

For people listening today who would be interested in volunteering. Would you recommend that they get involved with HAAG or with other organisations at Ross House ?

Well HAAG's terrific because it's convenient, I actually really enjoy coming into the city. I am sure that some people don't but I do. Obviously, public transport is easy. The people here have been very, very welcoming. It's been very clear that there is a clear roster, there are clear people to go to if you have any questions. That's where you know where you stand, I suppose. I have had a lot of training and that's been really helpful and interesting. Certainly I would recommend HAAG, but I think there are many organisations, obviously hospitals, community services, there's probably no end to ways that you can get involved. I must say that while I have got many other things to do, coming in and volunteering actually gives me a different perspective on things. It gives me things to talk about with other people and to talk to people about some of the really important issues that people are having these days.

June



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POWER RADICAL RADIO

3CR RADIOTHON
3-16 JUNE 2019
DONATE NOW
TARGET
\$250,000



July



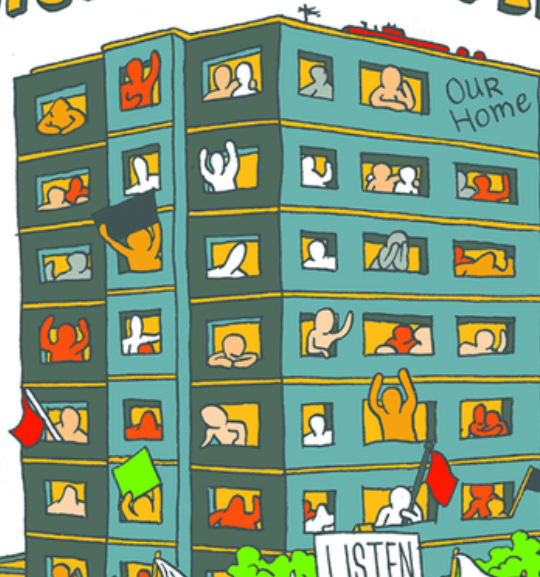
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FAIR GO FOR PENSIONERS CONFERENCE

COME AND DISCUSS
WHAT'S GONE WRONG,
WHAT SORT OF
'WELFARE' SERVICES
AND SOCIETY WE
WANT, & HOW WE
CAN GET THERE.

THIS CONFERENCE
WILL BE HELD ON
WURUNDJERI
COUNTRY.

SOVEREIGNTY
WAS
NEVER
CEDED.



THE EVENT IS
FREE, BUT SEATS
ARE LIMITED.
PLEASE REGISTER:
eventsfgfpvictoria
@gmail.com
OR 04 77 236880.

IF YOU WOULD
LIKE AN INTERP-
RETER, PLEASE
LET US KNOW
WHICH LANGUAGE
YOU SPEAK.

ALL
WELCOME.



WEDNESDAY THE 10TH OF JULY 2019, 9:00-4:00 PM
COBURG GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, COMMUNITY HALL, 23-29 VICTORIA STREET COBURG.



Our Aged Care Service Navigator Trials are up and running, thanks to our team of volunteers who are ready to help you get connected with any Aged Care services you may need.



Do you, or somebody you know, need help to understand and navigate the aged care system? The aged care system can be very confusing, but HAAG's volunteer service navigators are here to help!

HAAG' Aged Care Navigator Trial can help you to:

- Register with My Aged Care - the starting point for accessing all aged care services.
- Prepare you for what to expect when you contact My Aged Care and what will happen when you get referred for an aged care assessment
- Refer you to services who can provide additional support

We can answer questions like

- What is the role of the government agency My Aged Care?
- What is an assessment?
- Who provides me with a service?

How can I get help

Our services are free, confidential and independent.

Call us on **9654 7389** for information and assistance with accessing aged care, or visit www.older tenants.org.au/aged-care

A volunteer led service

This trial project is funded by the Department of Human Services but there is no way it could be possible without the team of volunteers who are giving up their time to learn and teach others about how to access the Aged Care system. Its making a real difference in the lives of so many older people who just aren't aware of the kind of services they may be eligible for.

If your interested in joining the Navigator team get in touch with rebecca.walton@oldertentants.org.au

Federal Election

Housing and homelessness were not major issues during the 2019 Federal Election campaign, despite the housing crisis and an increase in awareness of the plight of older women facing homelessness. The main housing-focused discussion was around negative gearing, which the ALP had promised to roll back if elected. The election results were disappointing for the community housing sector, who was hoping for increased funding to support the building of new community housing. It was also disappointing to anyone who was hoping for a more progressive Australia.



HAAG's election scorecard ranked the Parties policies on the issues that matter to older renters.

New Ministerial roles for Housing and Homelessness

The Victorian member for Deakin, Michael Sukkar MP is now in the new role of Minister for Housing, which sits in the “outer” ministry so is not part of Cabinet. There is also now a new dedicated role Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services and the member for Petrie in Queensland Luke Howarth MP has been appointed to that role. Centrelink was previously under the responsibility of the Minister for Human Services, and is now under the Minister for Government Services – Stuart Robert MP, who is in Cabinet, has been appointed to that role. We will be writing to these new ministers to let them know about our work, including the homelessness action plan.

Ken Wyatt MP, who was a key driver of the diversity action plans in aged care (including homelessness) while he was Aged Care Minister, has become the first Aboriginal Commonwealth Cabinet Minister and Minister for Indigenous Australians. We congratulate him and thank him for his support while he was Aged Care Minister. Taking over the Aged Care and Senior Australians portfolios from Mr Wyatt is Tasmanian Senator, Mr Richard Colbeck.



Minister Ken Wyatt speaking with HAAG's Jeff Fiedler and Sandra South

Victorian State Budget

In May, the State Government’s budget included a commitment to extend successful homelessness programs and to deliver on its election commitment to build 1,000 new units of public housing by 2022. Although we welcome continued investment in the service sector providing vital services, there still needs to be significantly more investment in public housing, with the waitlist now at 82000 people. Council to Homeless Persons is calling on the state government to build at least 3000 new properties per year for ten years to come close to addressing this shortfall, and given the rental affordability crisis in Victoria, we wholeheartedly support that goal.

The lack of adequate investment in public housing was made even more disappointing when compared with the \$1.8 billion dollar commitment to building new prisons. As we know, poverty is a key factor leading to imprisonment, and people are being locked up for “crimes” that are simply the result of poverty, discrimination and trauma. According to the Federation of Community Legal Centres, who are running a campaign against prison expansion, this amount of money could build 2,200 public homes or 10 new hospitals. To sign on to their petition, see www.fclc.org.au/no_pride_in_prisons

Taking to the streets



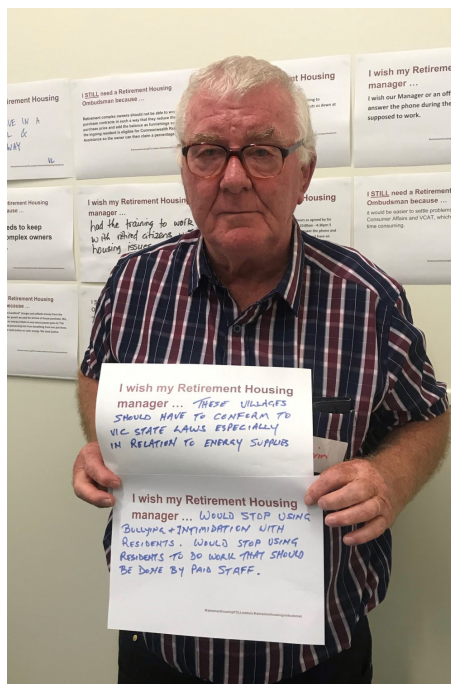
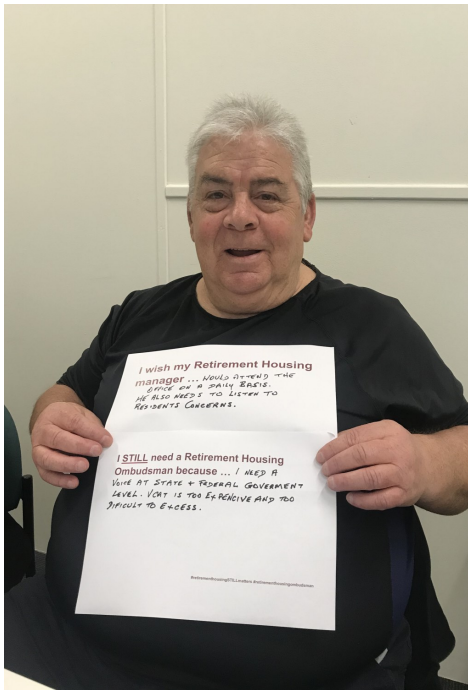
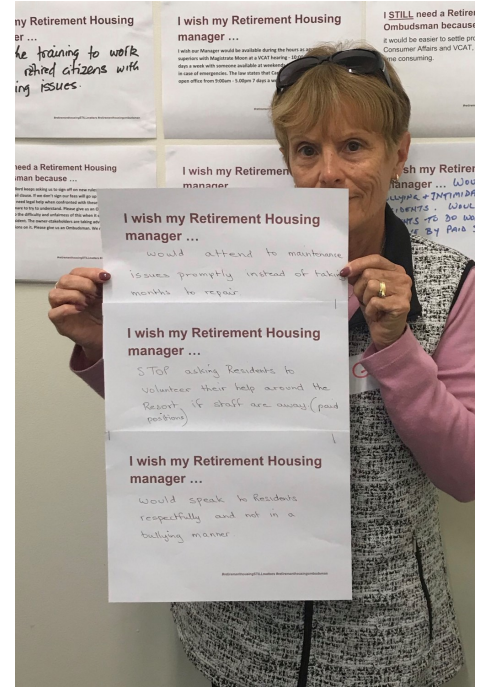
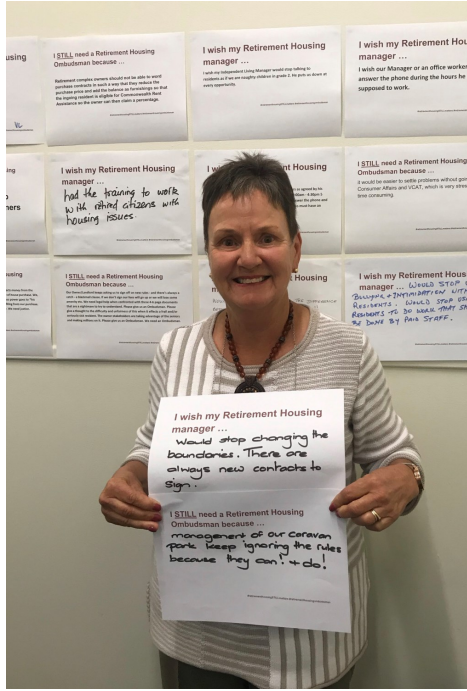
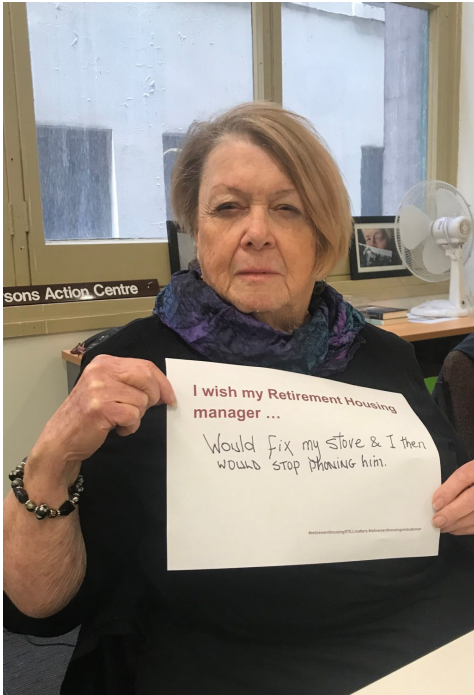
HAAG staff attended the Change the Rules Rally in April, marching for job security and fair pay for all working Australians, joining tens of thousands of unionists from across the state, including the Australian Services Union.



HAAG staff also attended the Friday Climate School Strike rally in March, in recognition of the impact of the climate emergency on older people. The sign was donated to us by one of the school kids there.

RETIREMENT HOUSING DAY OF ACTION

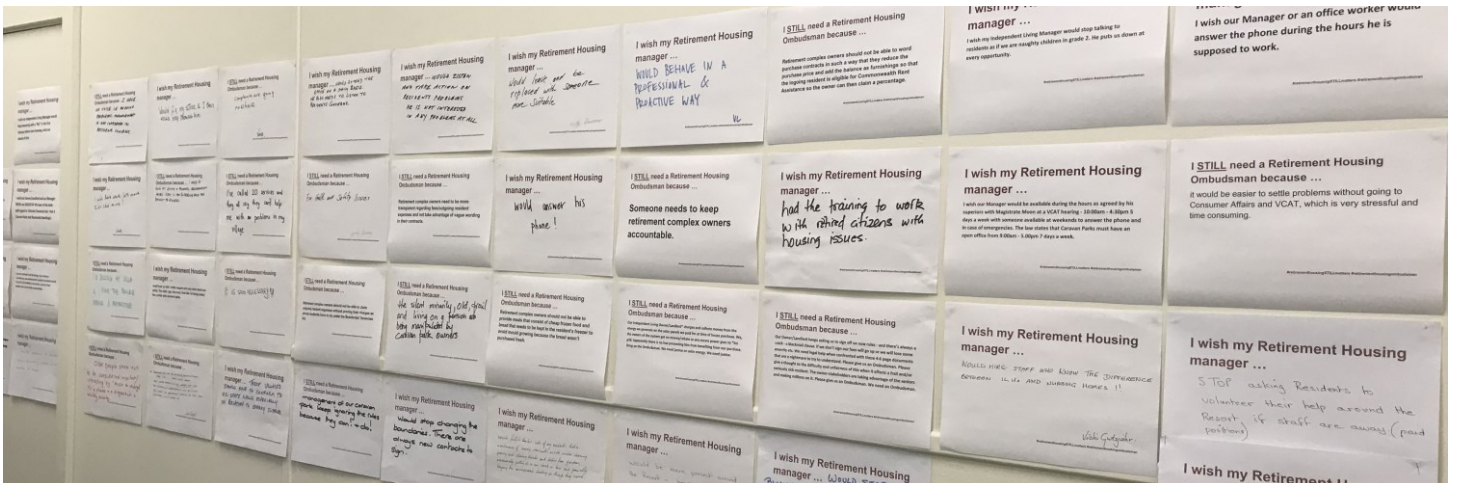
On May 17th HAAG hosted a 'Day of Action' at our office as well as in retirement villages, parks and Independent Living Units across the state.



We made posters to make sure the State government knows why retirement housing STILL matters.

If you'd like to be involved in future actions with the Retirement Accommodation Action Group talk to fiona.waters@oldertenants.org.au

Together we are stronger and our voices louder!



Caravan Park and Movable Dwellings Regulations Consultation

In March this year the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) met with HAAG members to consult them regarding a review of the caravan park and moveable dwellings regulations.

The sunset review consultation paper has now been released and the full public consultation is open. This means Part 4 and Part 4A residents have an opportunity to respond to the questions that DELWP have put forward in the paper. This feedback is required from all stakeholders, including park owners and managers whose opinions may compromise your rights and ability to live safely – it is vital to ensure the residents' perspectives, such as yours, are included.

If you have ideas or comments about how things such as: fire regulations, health and safety in the park, maintenance of communal facilities/shared spaces and requirements of caravan, moveable units, annexes and other accessibility concerns should be regulated then your opinion will be vital for this consultation.

The due date for submissions is the 23rd of June. You can contribute via the website engage.vic.gov.au/caravan-parks-regulations-sunset-review

A DELWP worker will be attending HAAG CBD offices on the 21st of June during the RAAG meeting to answer any questions people have on the submission questions and processes. Please RSVP to Fiona Waters ASAP if you would like to attend.

Deferred Management Fees - Should you have to pay?

HAAG had a big victory recently in a VCAT matter about a Deferred Management Fee. For many years, Deferred Management Fees (DMFs) have been a key issue for many of our members who live in retirement villages or residential parks. These are fees, often very high, that residents pay when they move out. This can be devastating for the residents or their families, eating up a huge chunk of the value of what's often their only asset.

HAAG helped a couple living in a residential park make an application arguing that the part of their contract that charged them a DMF was invalid because it didn't meet the requirements in the Residential Tenancies Act for fees charged under a site agreement. The Tribunal agreed and found that the couple weren't liable for the fee – a potential saving to them of tens of thousands of dollars.

What does this mean for other residents? We don't know - yet. Contracts are written in lots of different ways, and some DMF clauses may be valid while others are not. Even if the clause is the same, a different VCAT member might make a different decision. But we're keen to test this – to look at peoples' contracts and think about whether we could challenge these fees.

In November 2018 HAAG was contracted by the Federal Government to develop a draft Aged Care Homelessness Action Plan. Addressing homelessness from an aged care perspective is a vital approach as it focuses on the importance of having a home to be able to age well.

'For older people to age well, they must be housed well' Prof. Andrew Jones

So over the next six months we employed Dr Sandra South, Dr Sue Malta and Bradley Foster to develop the Homelessness Action Plan. Their work was directed by a Reference Group and has involved conducting surveys, interviews and face-to-face consultations with older people and aged care services across Australia to find out what needs to be done to improve assistance to older people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The draft plan is divided into three distinct areas: Actions that the government needs to take, actions for aged care services and the rights of older people to be able to access the services they need.

While developing the plans, we hope the outcome will work towards:

- Improving aged care assessments – so that these services can better identify and assist people at risk of homelessness
- Connecting older people experiencing or at risk of homelessness with services that can help them with housing
- Improving the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACH) Program – a fantastic program that has been severely underfunded since it started in 1993
- Improving residential aged care services for frail older people who have been homeless – some residential care facilities provide a home for people who have experienced homelessness, such as Wintringham, and receive a subsidy in recognition of the extra support needed.

What happens next?

HAAG will complete the draft Homelessness Action Plans by the end of June 2019. The draft will be presented to the Minister for Aged Care and finalised by the Federal Government. The draft plan can be viewed on HAAG's website at www.older tenants.org.au/i-want-change/projects/aged-care-homelessness-action-plan . If you would like a copy sent to you in the mail please contact us at the office on 03 96547389.

HAAG is developing a strategy to see the key elements of the plan implemented by government. We are focusing strongly on getting better funding and development for the Assistance with Care (ACH) Program and we will keep you updated on our progress. If you have received support from our fantastic ACH workers and would like to tell us your story then please contact Jeff Fiedler on 03 96547389. We would also welcome members with experience of ACH to join us in lobbying the Federal Government for improvements to the Program.

For 14 years John* was living in a private rental flat attached to a bottle shop in Brunswick West. Throughout his years of living there, he recalled only a handful of times that his landlord visited the property. Many of his requests for maintenance of the property, including water flooding through the ceiling when it rained, were ignored and he was simply asked to 'use a different room' of the house. This resulted in mould, paint and plaster peeling and an overall uninhabitable premises, creating a hazardous place to live.

On the 13th anniversary of his residence at the dilapidated dwelling, John was advised by the landlord that the property was scheduled to be demolished. He was presented with a written Notice to Vacate from his landlord which was dated to happen by November 2019, possibly sooner.

John felt immense pressure to find alternative, safe and affordable accommodation.

He presented to Home At Last in February 2019 to meet with an intake worker. John expressed his concerns about his housing and for his future and worried that he would not be able to find somewhere to live before November came around. He explained that he had previously experienced homelessness and was particularly nervous about going into emergency accommodation, as he did not have a good experience or feel safe there in the past.

Another concern that John had was ensuring that he can be housed with his pet dog, Max. Max has been with John for over 10 years now. He finds comfort and companionship in his pet dog who has been with him throughout a number of hardships he has faced, including financial and health issues leading to many hospitalisations - most of these issues stemming from his unsafe accommodation.



John and Max in their new home

John was allocated an outreach worker from HAL who assisted him with a Homeless with Support application. As soon as he was approved, he was nominated for a vacancy of the redevelopment projects that had just been completed by the Department of Housing.

He was successfully housed last month (May 2019), provided with new bed, fridge and new household items for a fresh start.

'I'm starting to feel better about myself, getting into a routine and settling into my new home'. - John.

John is thankful for the assistance provided by Home At Last and has expressed that he is now able to focus on improving his health and continuing to engage in the community without the stress of worrying about finding an affordable and secure housing.

*Name changed



We are working with a group of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) organisations on a project to find out about the housing circumstances for older LGBTI people, their knowledge of what options are available and what their future needs may be in relation to safe and affordable housing. The first meeting of the steering committee included Val's LGBTI Age Care and Aging, Switchboard's Out and About program and the Australian Association of Gerontology's LGBTI working group (pictured).

At the meeting we agreed to Terms of Reference and a project plan for the coming year. This will include a research project with AAG and community consultation. We are hoping to reach out to older LGBTIQ+ people who are interested in sharing their experiences of housing, including their understanding of housing options for older people and how they find information and access services. We want to speak to a range of people from all walks of life to hear about their housing circumstances, including people who are renting or paying off a mortgage, living in the country or the city, living alone or with friends or family, aged from 50 to 100.

We are also seeking people who want to be heard and be active around housing issues for older LGBTI people, to work towards improving the system.

If this sounds like you, or someone you know, please contact Rebecca Walton, project worker at Housing for the Aged Action Group 03 9654 7389 or email rebecca.walton@oldertenants.org.au – she would love to have a chat with you.

We are really excited to be starting work on this project, and are looking forward to presenting our research at the 4th National LGBTI Ageing Conference in October this year.

125

Female Clients

106

Male Clients

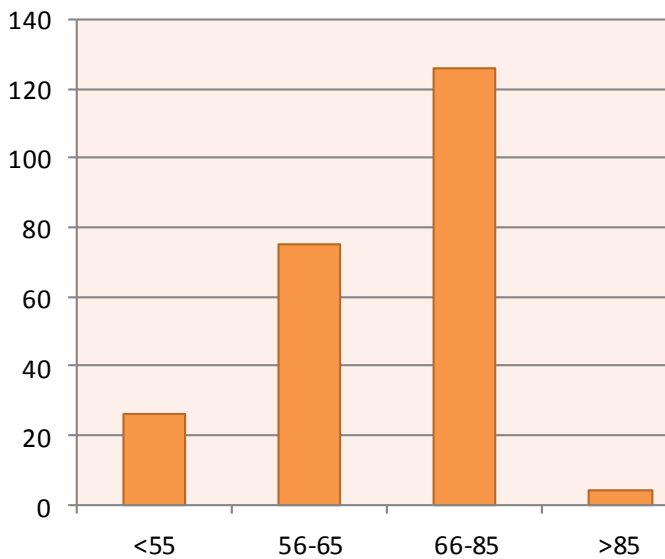
55%

from CALD Backgrounds

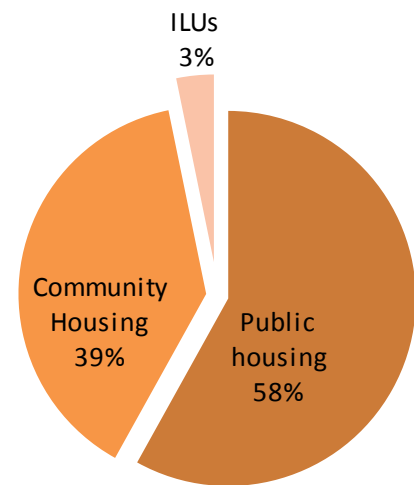
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Clients Housed

Age of People Seeking Assistance

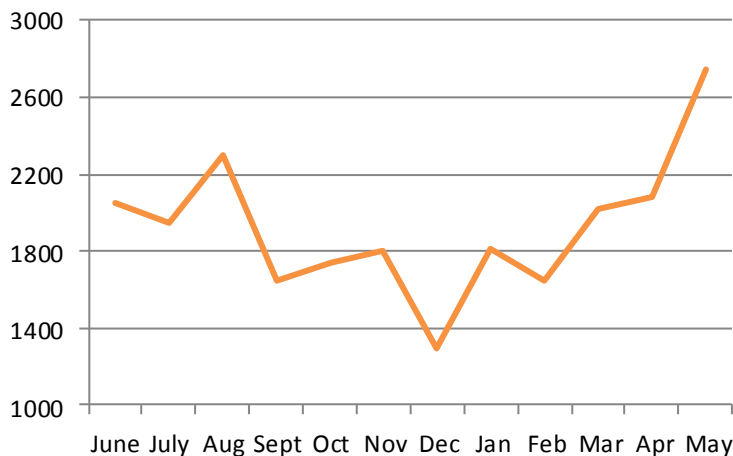


Housing Outcomes



HAAG ON THE WEB

Unique Visitors to oldertenants.org.au



In the last year we've greatly expanded our website to include a research library, podcasts, client stories, vacancies, more information on housing options, community language resources and more!

Visit us at oldertenants.org.au and follow us on social media to keep up with the latest updates!

Housing for the Aged Action Group

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Melbourne 3000

ADMIN: 9654 7389

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www.older tenants.org.au 1300 765 178 haag@older tenants.org.au



Fighting for Housing Justice for older people since 1983

HAAG offers FREE confidential advice, housing and support to over-55's



Fiona presenting Kathy with an award at our May General Meeting

- Housing Options Information
- Outreach Housing Support
- Retirement Housing Advice & Support
- Research & Policy Development