

Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Dr Sandra South

Organisation Name: Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG)

Your position or role: Senior Policy and Research Officer on behalf of James Beckford Saunders, Chief Executive Officer

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Drag the statements below to reorder them. In order of priority, please rank the themes you believe are most important for this inquiry into homelessness to consider::

Public housing, Housing affordability, Services, Employment, Indigenous people, Mental health, Family violence, Rough sleeping

What best describes your interest in our Inquiry? (select all that apply) :

A peak body

Are there any additional themes we should consider?

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1: [5dfafc910c6d8-AAG Submission Vic Parliamentary Inquiry Homelessness 20191219.pdf](#)

File2:

File3:

Signature:

Sandra South

Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament of Victoria

Via committee submission page: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lxic-lc/article/4284>

AAG submission- Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness

19 December 2019

To Whom it May Concern,

The Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) thanks the Legal and Social Issues Committee of the Parliament of Victoria for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria.

AAG's purpose is to improve the experience of ageing through connecting research, policy and practice. Its principles are to be evidence informed, multi-disciplinary and holistic, independent, collaborative and fair. AAG has a growing membership of over 1,455 professionals working across every State and Territory in Australia representing all sectors and disciplines in ageing including research, policy, education, aged care, health and allied health, and consumer advocacy. AAG has 20 Collaborating Research Centres which represent all major research in ageing and aged care and is connected internationally as the executive office of both the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics Asia Oceania Region and the International Longevity Centre – Australia.

AAG has a Housing and Built Environment Special Interest Group (HBESIG), Chaired by Dr Victoria Cornell, that includes experts on the intersections between ageing, housing and the environment. **AAG would be honoured to connect the Legal and Social Issues Committee with experts that can provide research evidence on any issues that arise during your Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria.**

AAG has recently published and contributed to a number of papers that are of relevance to the [Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria](#), namely that the Committee should:

1. provide an independent analysis of the changing scale and nature of homelessness across Victoria;
2. investigate the many social, economic and policy factors that impact on homelessness; and
3. identify policies and practices from all levels of government that have a bearing on delivering services to the homeless.

AAG has recently conducted a series of projects (more information below) to explore the research, professional, service provider and lived-experiences of homelessness for older people in Australia. There is international agreement in the research literature that affordable, appropriate and secure housing is fundamental to the success of any services aimed at combatting homelessness. Housing must reflect older people's needs, as well as their desired level of social interactions. Furthermore, as income is intrinsically linked to the affordability of housing, any income support payments must be sufficient to prevent ongoing poverty and risk of homelessness.

Research also shows that older women in Australia are more likely than older men to experience homelessness for the first time in later life due to the socioeconomic landscape they inhabit. This risk is multiplied by the lack of secure affordable housing that is suitable for older Australians, a risk factor that is agreed to be one of the main contributing factors to homelessness in Australia. Older women can therefore experience homelessness with little or no warning

as a result of a single crisis or change in circumstances such as an increase in rent, eviction notice, reduction in income, or death of spouse. Many older women experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness therefore do not fit the stereotype of a person who has experienced homelessness repeatedly or for long periods throughout their lives, who has complex needs and who has experienced multiple, cumulative risk factors. However, there are also older women experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness with multiple compounding risk factors and complex needs. Research to date has shown that older women are more likely than older men to have an increased risk of homelessness due to: living alone; intimate partner violence and other relationship breakdowns; exhausting social networks for housing support; being reluctant to seek formal support; providing housing for family, kin and friends; as well as trauma and poor mental health.

Depending on their needs, experiences and age, older people require differing levels of housing support and aged care services tailored for older people who have experienced homelessness, including:

- Prevention, early intervention and housing advice services
- More intensive supports to secure appropriate housing
- Aged care in the home tailored to prevent ongoing risk of homelessness
- Aged care in residential facilities tailored for people who have experienced homelessness
- Other services linked to housing support and aged care including, health, mental health, legal, trauma-informed services and support for people from diverse backgrounds.

There must be integration between housing and aged care services; from early intervention/prevention of homelessness to more intensive services providing specialised aged care for people who have experienced homelessness. The aged care system is complex and provides supports separate to the usual community and social service avenues, so more services specialised in providing support to older people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness are needed.

In collaboration with the HBESIG, AAG has recently published the following evidence-based papers that may be of interest to this inquiry:

Collaborative papers on older women experiencing or at risk of homelessness

(<https://www.aag.asn.au/news-publications/policy-papers/aag-collaborative-project-on-older-women-experiencing-or-at-risk-of-homelessness>)

In August 2018 AAG in collaboration with a range of experts, advocates and services providers launched three papers addressing older women who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness:

1. **[Position Paper—For Federal, State and Territory Australian governments](#)**. The recommendations in this Position Paper have been developed based on the evidence summarised in the Background Paper- Older women experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. This Position Paper is aimed at Federal, State and Territory Australian governments. **The Position Paper identifies five key areas where improvements can be made to ensure that older women who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness have access to the right services:**
 - i. **A fundamental need for social and institutional change to address the lack of affordable, appropriate and secure housing supply, as well as to address the lower socio-economic status of women compared to men**
 - ii. **Changes to ensure that the aged care system can meet its legislated responsibility for meeting the needs of older people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.**
 - iii. **The integration of aged care, homelessness, health, social service and disability systems.**
 - iv. **Prioritisation of early detection and intervention.**
 - v. **Expansion and further development of services that are appropriate for the age, gender, and needs of older women who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.**
2. **[Background Paper— For policy makers and people working with older people](#)**. The Background Paper provides a summary of the research evidence, service provider experiences and feedback, current Australian statistics, and current Australian services. The aim of this paper is to provide an introduction to the diverse

experiences and needs of older people, and in particular older women, who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. The intended audience is policy-makers and people working with older Australians, including personal care workers in facilities and people's homes, aged care leaders, health and allied health professionals, and researchers.

3. **Things to consider - For practitioners and service providers who are not experienced and/or specialised in providing services.** This document outlines issues for practitioners and service providers to consider when working with older women who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. The target audience is primarily practitioners and service providers who are not experienced and/or specialised in providing services to older women experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

AAG Position Paper: Regulating accessible housing enables all Australians to age in a place of their choosing (<https://www.aag.asn.au/news-publications/policy-papers/aag-position-paper-regulating-accessible-housing-enables-all-australians-to-age-in-a-place-of-their-choosing>)

AAG's position is that the accessibility of housing stock, especially public and rental housing stock, is crucial to reducing the risk of homelessness in older Australians. Australians may be forced out of their home due to its inaccessibility, or they may be forced to rent a home that is unaffordable to them in the long-term due to the limited availability of affordable public and private rental housing that is accessible.

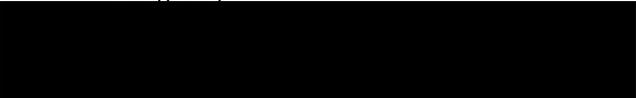
- This Position Paper has been developed in response to the September 2018 Australian Building Codes Board's (ABCB's) Accessible Housing Options Paper. It states AAG's position that:
 - A minimum accessibility standard should be regulated for all new housing so that all Australians can age in a place of their choosing
 - The Livable Housing Design Guidelines (LHDG) Gold Level specifications should be set as the minimum requirement, with the addition of some Platinum Level features

AAG notes that the Federal Government is currently considering the draft Aged Care Homelessness Action Plans for approval and implementation. **If implemented, these Homelessness Action Plans would help to reduce the likelihood of older and prematurely aged people falling through the gaps and not receiving appropriate aged care services; thereby reducing the risk of homelessness.** The draft Action Plans developed by Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including AAG, are [available here on HAAG's website](#):

1. **Draft Action Plan for the Australian Government proposed by those consulted.** This document outlines actions for the Australian Government that those consulted identified as needing to be implemented in order for aged care providers to be able to meet the needs of people who have experienced, or been at risk of, homelessness.
2. **Draft Provider Homelessness Action Plan.** Three levels of actions are presented in this document: 1. Foundational Actions, 2. Moving Forward, and 3. Leading the Way. The "Leading the Way" actions include specific actions for specialist homelessness aged care services.
3. **Draft Consumer Homelessness Action Plan.** This one-page document is intended both to help people who have experienced, or been at risk of, homelessness express their needs when speaking with aged care providers, and as a resource to support people working in aged care to understand the perspectives of people who have experienced, or been at risk of, homelessness.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this submission, would like more evidence on a specific issue, or would like to be connected with one of AAG's experts on the intersections between ageing, housing and the environment.

Kind regards,


James Beckford Saunders, Chief Executive Officer
