

RRVV Annual Meeting 2017

President's Address to Members

2016-2017 was a hectic year for RRVV. The volume and pace of work stretched your Committee to the limit.

RRVV's main activity is helping members solve some of the problems that arise from living in a retirement village.

Requests for information and assistance continued throughout the year at about the same level as in previous years. We estimate we received just over 900 enquiries. Committee members visited 18 villages. Feedback from the people and villages who asked for assistance was gratifyingly positive. We thank you

Important as supporting individual residents and villages is, the RRVV Committee also works behind the scenes lobbying both government and operators.

Along with the residents' associations from the other mainland states, in late July 2016, representatives from the Committee met with the executive of the Retirement Living Council. This is the peak body that represents owners and operators of retirement villages. The meeting was cordial but made little progress on contentious matters such as improved resident rights and protections, timely maintenance and freedom of information.

From 28 September to 29 November 2016, at least one RRVV committee member attended every public hearing of the Legal and Social Issues Committee of the Parliament as it took evidence on the state of the retirement housing sector. Your committee much appreciated the support of members on the day we gave evidence. The hearing room was packed. We understand the strength of member support throughout the hearings impressed the politicians. Well done to you all.

In December 2016, we filed a submission on Consumer Affairs Victoria's options paper for reform of the Owners Corporations Act. We are seeking changes to the Act to give clear and unified voting rights to residents in villages transitioning from strata titles to leasehold contracts and the outlawing of rorts that deny residents of many strata titled villages the right to participate fully in the running of their villages.

In March 2017, we participated in a press conference on the steps of Parliament House to publicise the release of the Parliament's report on retirement housing. Crews from two TV networks and reporters from Fairfax and Murdoch papers turned up. This attention proved to be a turning point in our quest for reform of the retirement village sector. The TV networks ran

a story that night, and the newspapers published articles the next day. The media, at last, showed some interest in what we had been trying to publicise for years.

In April 2017, we attended a meeting at Consumer Affairs Victoria's offices with representatives of three other residents focused organisations - Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG), Council on the Ageing (COTA) and Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC) and two representatives from the Retirement Living Council. Consumer Affairs Victoria called the meeting to consider changes to retirement village internal dispute resolution protocols. We later filed follow up representations. We await a result.

We attend as many of these meetings as we can because they give us direct access to the public servants that brief the Minister for Consumer Affairs.

Also in April, we filed a submission on Consumer Affairs Victoria's options paper for reform of the Estate Agents Act advocating for, amongst other things, better training for people who sell retirement village units and leases and the outlawing of commission on operator buybacks.

Around 135 residents from various forms of retirement housing attended a forum on 1 May 2017 called to review the Inquiry recommendations. HAAG organised the forum and did a superb job. Almost two-thirds of attendees were RRVV members. Thank you to all members who attended. Your contributions were of great value to the reform cause.

In May, Channel Nine's A Current Affair ran a story covering the problems of complex and misleading retirement village contracts.

In June the ABC's Four Corners ran a critical program on Aveo, a big operator of around 73 villages nationwide. This program had a significant impact on all owners and operators.

The Age newspaper and others followed up with a continuous stream of stories.

Late in June 2017, the Government published new regulations covering retirement village contractual arrangements. These regulations took effect on 1 August 2017. The new regulations do not reform retirement village contracts, but it is pleasing to see that they do address some problems that RRVV drew to the attention of Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Our financial year ended on the 30th of June, but the hectic pace continues.

Not all members are comfortable with the media publicity. We understand this. We cringe at the misrepresentations and the lack of positive recommendations. Nevertheless, it has certainly had some positive effects.

Since the Four Corners program, owners and operators have been much more cooperative with RRVV. For example, the July 2017 residents meeting with the Retirement Living Council was far

more productive than the 2016 meeting. Senior representatives from 22 retirement village businesses attended. This industry attendance was double that of the of the previous year. Most operators wanted to understand better the resident point of view.

On the 7th of September, the Government published its response to the Inquiry's recommendations. We were disappointed with the equivocal response to the key recommendations. We are especially disappointed for the hundreds of members who made submissions to the enquiry and gave oral evidence. We believe you deserve a clear-cut and positive response.

On the 12th of September RRVV gave evidence on retirement village rates to the Parliament's Inquiry into the sustainability and operational challenges of Victoria's rural and regional councils.

We continue to press the Government to act more quickly and positively in implementing the recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into retirement housing, and we continue to work with owners and operators who show a genuine desire to understand the residents' point of view.

Today John Lumley retires from the RRVV Committee and the position of Treasurer. John has tirelessly served RRVV for six years. He has a couple of duties to perform before he finally packs his bags so I will save further remarks for later in the day.

Also later today we will give special thanks to our Resident Liaison officers – 100 plus people who support us day in and day out.

I thank the whole Committee for the outstanding work done during the 2016-2017 year and the first part 2017-2018. Each one of you has given up countless hours and demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the cause. Lesley Menzies served as our President until November 2016, John Lumley as Treasurer and general can-do person, Gail Henderson as Secretary and helpline coordinator, Peter Saalmans as our IT and website manager, Owen Menzies as our membership coordinator until November 2016 and Graeme Seymour as our assistant to the Treasurer since August 2017.

On the 14th of November, the new Committee will meet to review program for the remainder of the financial year and beyond. Please make your views known to the new committee

Thank you for your attention.