

RRVV

NEWSLETTER

Issue No 51 September 2018

Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria Inc.
REGISTERED PUBLICATION No.P.P. 100018833

Reg No.0048146R ABN 20341655161

P.O.Box 2402
CAULFIELD JUNCTION 3161

Phone: **03 9015 8402**

president@rrvv.org.au

secretary@rrvv.org.au

treasurer@rrvv.org.au

membership@rrvv.org.au

Web: www.rrvv.org.au

STATE OPPOSITION COMMITS TO A RETIREMENT HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

A Liberal-Nationals state government, if elected in November, will establish a retirement housing ombudsman. Opposition leader Matthew Guy said when announcing the commitment, “the ombudsman would provide binding resolutions to eligible disputes in the retirement housing sector”.

This announcement is a pleasing development in a long-running joint campaign by RRVV, Consumer Action Law Centre, Housing for the Aged Action Group and Council on the Ageing Victoria to secure for residents the option to apply for a binding resolution without having to make a case before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

RRVV believes the origins of the state opposition’s announcement lie in significant part in the interactions between members attending our 2017 Annual Meeting and our guest speaker, the Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs, Heidi Victoria. We thank all members who attended for the courtesy you extended to our guest speaker and for your spirited advocacy for our collective cause. We also thank you for your letter writing and emailing advocacy over the past 12 months.

The next step in our campaign to obtain a retirement housing ombudsman is to persuade the Government to make a similar commitment to that of the opposition. RRVV along with, Consumer Action Law Centre, Housing for the Aged Action Group and Council on the Ageing Victoria will shortly invite you to participate in a postcard campaign designed to raise the profile of our quest for an ombudsman with the Premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews.

RETIREMENT LIVING CODE OF CONDUCT PUBLIC CONSULTATION PERIOD ENDS

The proposed Retirement Living Code of Conduct is an initiative of the three peak bodies representing the owners and operators of retirement villages; the Retirement Living Council (a division of the Property Council of Australia), Leading Age Services Australia and Age and Community Services Australia.

The peak bodies invited all the retirement village residents’ associations (RRVV, Association of Residents in Queensland Retirement Villages, NSW Retirement Village Residents Association, ACT Retirement Village Residents Association, South Australian Retirement Villages Residents Association and Western Australian Retirement Villages Residents Association) and their members to comment. They also invited their resident’s’ committees to provide feedback on a consultation draft of the code.

Contents

State Opposition Commitment.....	p1
Consultation Period Ends.....	p1
Latest Research Insights.....	p2
Applying for Dispute Mediation.....	p3
Retirement Village Electricity Supplies.....	p3
From ‘The Beehive’.....	p4
October 2018 RLO Meeting & Agenda...	p5
2018 AGM & Agenda.....	p6
The RRVV Committee Needs You.....	p7
RRVV Financial Reports.....	p8

All six retirement village residents associations through their peak body, the Australian Retirement Villages Association, declined to endorse the consultation draft as presented. Some made individual submissions giving their reasons.

RRVV lodged a very detailed response. You may read it on our website (rrvv.org.au). Many members also made individual submissions. Thank you for your support.

The main reasons RRVV is unable to support the code as it is are that it:

- Has statements of purpose and objectives that are more about benefiting owners and operators than residents;
- Makes no clear ethical commitments;
- Does little to strengthen residents freedoms, rights and protections or minimise the problems residents experience;
- Does not acknowledge that there is dubious practice in the sector and does not commit to taking corrective action;
- Proposes to set up an alternative dispute resolution system that is expensive and won't be able to make binding determinations, and offers no support for an ombudsman;
- Proposes a supervisory committee dominated by owners and operators, allows code signatories to certify their own code compliance and does not apply strong sanctions for code non-compliance.

RRVV recommends the peak bodies work with the six retirement village residents associations to draft a completely new code.

The consultation period ended on Friday 31 August. A spokesperson advised RRVV that the drafting committee had received more than 200 direct public submissions, almost all from residents and expressed the committee's thanks. The spokesperson also said that the committee aims to be in a position to finalise any changes before the end of the year.

RRVV will again advise the committee that the proposed code is fundamentally flawed and requires more than a patch up.

MORE INSIGHTS FROM THE LATEST RETIREMENT VILLAGE RESEARCH

In our last newsletter, we reported that resident satisfaction was high, but problems were lurking beneath the surface that put the spotlight on village managers.

In this issue, we focus on residents' expectations and the reality of village life.

On the whole, villages perform at or slightly above expectations and around half of all residents feel their village either matches or comes close to the ideal. Nevertheless, 30% of survey respondents reported their villages fell short of expectations in one or both of two key areas:

1. Availability of on-site care
2. Maintenance

To a lesser extent, respondents reported villages also fell short in the availability and performance of on-site response staff and access to village manager support.

These findings broadly align with the comments members make when they telephone, email or use the RRVV website to send a message (see RRVV contact details on the front page of this newsletter).

More generally, the research findings suggest that a significant proportion of the people entering a village feel they already need support or anticipate needing support shortly and that a majority anticipate needing support in the longer term. The research also suggests that a majority of people entering villages see their village as extending the time they will be able to live independently. RRVV believes that what residents expect is not the same as that which many operators offer as 'independent living'.

The number of operators interested in providing on-site care is increasing whether through co-locating villages and aged care facilities, providing on-site in-home care or both. RRVV sees this as a positive development. Nevertheless, we remain concerned that many people are entering villages with care expectations that their village will not meet.

Maintenance is one of the most frequent complaints reported to RRVV. We have observed very few villages have a professional approach to maintenance. We are aware of one multi-state operator making a serious attempt to re-engineer its village maintenance processes with

the objectives of improving quality, shortening delivery times and cutting costs. We hope the project meets its objectives and sets the standard for all operators.

The research findings on on-site support and village manager support are consistent with the broader findings on what residents expect. They want people on hand to call on when something goes wrong.

Yes, overall villages do meet the expectations of a majority of residents, but there is no room for operator complacency. A significant proportion of residents do want improvements.

APPLYING TO CONSUMER AFFAIRS VICTORIA FOR DISPUTE MEDIATION

In our last newsletter, we explained the process of applying to Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) for free mediation of disputes not resolved at the village level. It's a simple process, but the experience of members who have used it recently suggests there are some traps for the unwary.

To lodge a complaint you can ring Consumer Affairs Victoria on 1300 55 81 81 or go to www.consumer.vic.gov.au/contact-us/resolve-your-problem-or-complaint/when-we-get-involved-with-a-problem-or-complaint/residential-accommodation-complaint.

It is important to make clear when you lodge your complaint:

1. That you are seeking a referral to the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria. If you do not make this clear, CAV might refer you to some other support service.
2. Whether you want a support person or representative to attend the mediation session with you. A support person attends but does not speak whereas a representative may speak on your behalf. The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria has the right to exclude people who are disruptive from a mediation session.

If you lodge your complaint by phone, the Consumer Affairs Victoria case officer will ask you some questions about your issue including the outcome you desire. If your case qualifies for mediation, the case officer will transfer your call to the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria where another case officer will attend to you.

If you lodge your complaint in writing (for example, by using the residential accommodation complaint form available on the Consumer Affairs of Victoria website), you might hear from a case officer who asks you some clarifying questions. In any event, if your case qualifies for mediation the case officer will refer your complaint to the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria.

The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria does not have the power to compel an operator to attend mediation or the power to compel the parties to comply with any agreements they make in the course of the mediation. Similarly, it does not have the power to mediate on issues that fall within the enforcement responsibilities of Consumer Affairs Victoria. Nevertheless, it can still assist in resolving the interpersonal issues between a resident and an operator arising from such matters.

RRVV meets regularly with the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria to review in general terms the effectiveness of the mediation service. We can only contribute fully if you let us know you have applied for mediation and your satisfaction with the service you received. We do not need to know anything about your complaint or the outcome of the process. We would like to know if everything went smoothly and if the people you dealt with were respectful, courteous and competent.

There is more useful information on the RRVV website (www.rrvv.org.au) about making complaints.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES IN RETIREMENT VILLAGES

Thank you to all those members who told us earlier this year about their experiences of electricity suppliers in response to RRVV's request. We sought this information for a series of consultative meetings organised by the Essential Services Commission. RRVV attended the meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to provide feedback to the Commission on the effects of the regulation of electricity sellers who supply electricity via so-called "embedded networks" in retirement villages, apartment buildings, caravan parks and like accommodation complexes. Members' responses indicate that embedded networks supply electricity to about half the retirement village residents in Victoria.

The consultative meetings have concluded, and the commission has released a draft decision designed to ensure that village residents and other customers supplied via embedded networks have similar protections to other energy consumers; residents who receive their electricity directly from retailers such as AGL, Origin, and Powercor.

The proposed new rules will require village operators who sell electricity to residents to:

- make sure they get each resident's consent to an electricity selling arrangement
- provide a separate bill with specific details to each resident
- ensure that the information provided to residents is clear
- offer assistance to any residents who have difficulty paying electricity bills
- follow the rules for disconnecting residents including those with life support equipment.

The commission has announced its intention to release its final decision this month so that the new regulations can take effect from 1 January 2019.

All residents of retirement villages in Victoria will continue to have access to the Energy and Water Ombudsman ("EWOV") if they have a dispute regarding their electricity service, regardless of whether their electricity comes via an embedded network or a traditional electricity retailer.

More information is available from:

Essential Service Commission
www.esc.vic.gov.au

Energy and Water Ombudsman
www.ewov.com.au

FROM THE BEEHIVE



Aunty Bee has left the Beehive. Flown the coop. Abandoned ship. Gone AWOL. How has this left the rest of us feeling? Devastated? Bereft? Full of admiration and awe? Wishing her our best and leaving us wondering?

Have you noticed that Beehives aren't for everyone? Like if you are a giraffe, a beehive probably would not make a suitable home!

Beehives can vary, as do bees themselves, but this little bee, shall we call her Bee One, is besotted with her village, I mean beehive, of choice. Smug is the thought that springs to mind.

Interest rates rising? Phff. Doesn't concern this little bee. Bathroom tap leaking? Put in a maintenance slip. Grass needs mowing.? That will be attended to next week . . . but then there are the giraffes - lovely animals - but for many reasons they struggle to be enthusiastic about the beehive in which they live.

King and Queen bees can be another matter! Does the smooth running of a beehive depend upon whether one has a good or bad manager? Like schools? I have heard it said that a school is only as good as it's Principle. Surely one person can not make or break an establishment? Yes the management style of King and Queen Bees definitely influences the quality of life of residents.

The King or Queen bees have a thankless task. Remember you can't please all the bees all the time. Decisions that they make will not be to everyone's liking. It is however how they manage situations that makes all the difference to the enjoyment of beehive living. A great Village Manager is not gender specific. Some King bees are marvellous and some Queen bees are awful.

However recently while flying over an outer Eastern suburb, I noticed a beehive implementing new colorbond verandas. Imagine if you will, teeny, tiny constructions suitable for a beehive! The end product appeared aesthetically pleasing.

I buzzed down for a closer inspection. Observing the worker bees employed to erect said verandas proved very interesting. Worker bees is a misnomer. Hardly any work took place. Realising that these were not bees at all, but wasps, I wondered if the Queen bee was aware of what can only be described as laziness? This illustrated to me the huge range of responsibilities taken on by the Queen bees. Are they expected to be a project manager as well?

Cavalier the wasps were when some work actually took place. They deconstructed the old structure, throwing rotten wood all over what was once a beautiful garden and lawn area. Very haphazard. Several weeks later when the work was completed, I was astounded with how badly they had 'cleaned-up'.

My concern, apart from the laziness of the contractors, was to wonder why a Queen Bee had

deemed this particular type of construction the best option considering the times we are living in and the need to conserve water? The new structures no longer allow for rain to water the gardens. I fear the bees in this beehive are going to spend time and money watering areas that before would have flourished left to nature. What contributions to the project had the residents been given? None probably.

Now I hear the voice of reason. Bee Two. Yes, there is a Bee Two. Suffice to say that I'm the entertainment and he is the more grounded one. Bee Two points out that one person, i.e. a Queen Bee would not have been the only one to decide on such an important decision. All sorts of people and groups would have been consulted. Decisions of this multitude were more likely to be made by the Big Bumble Bees based on profit - nothing else. He further points out that rain at a certain angle will still penetrate under the new roofs of the veranda constructions. The fact that rotten wood was in the previous old verandas is proof that they needed replacing.

How lucky are we to have a mortgage-free roof over our heads? True that a beehive isn't an investment. It's a lifestyle choice. Our offspring may be shocked to learn there isn't much in the coffers upon our demise.

So tell them. Alert them. Forewarned is forearmed. Everyone knows or should know, that the purchase price is about what you'll/they'll get back even if you've lived in your beehive for 20 or 30 years. Although I have read that some beehives are implementing changes that may alter this. Let us hope the changes will be beneficial to future bees.

Finally before I buzz off I'd like to remind everyone that all beehives have a process to try and resolve disputes. If you are still struggling with an unresolved dispute contact RRVV. We are so lucky to have this wonderful, hard-working organisation in our corner.



P.S: Aunty Bee has written us a letter about her first months out of the beehive. It starts:

Two months ago, after nearly four years of living in a retirement village, I was able to sell my unit and move back out into the wider community.

Other residents of my retirement village made many and varied comments when they learned of my plan to move:

- You will be isolated
- You will be insecure
- You will have to take out the rubbish bins again
- Congratulations – I wish I could do the same
- I think you are very brave

It does feel different. I am aware of being responsible for myself again.....

You can read the full letter at: www.rrvv.org.au

OCTOBER 2018 RLO MEETING

- Date:** Monday 8 October 2018
Time: Lunch around 1 PM and start around 1:30 pm

Where: Victoria University Convention Centre Level 12, 300 Flinders Street, Melbourne (Exit Flinders Street Station from the Elizabeth Street end. The venue is on the north side of Flinders Street 75 metres west of Elizabeth Street)

Agenda: Please see the box below

OCTOBER 2018 RLO MEETING

Agenda

1. Open and welcome
2. Guest speaker followed by questions and answers
3. Pros and cons of inviting members to serve as regional RLO's
4. RRVV's office assistant – support for RLOs
5. Whole of village membership administration
6. New newsletter distribution process
7. Membership cards update
8. Reminder letter to residents who have not yet paid for 2018-2019
9. General business
10. Close

OCTOBER 2018 RLO MEETING (cont'd)

Catering: Light lunch

RSVP: Phone 9015 8402 or email admin@rrvv.org.au and, if you have any special dietary requirements, (e.g. gluten-free or vegetarian), please advise us.

We are again holding a combined AGM and RLO meeting. Please see the AGM notice below.

RLOs form the backbone of RRVV. Accordingly, we have invited one of our long-standing RLOs to lead off the meeting. Jacqueline Ots, the RLO from Redmond park will talk about her experiences and take questions.

During the year we received requests from residents in a couple of areas of the State for RRVV to open a regional office. Opening regional offices might be a step too far, but it is clear we need to find better ways to support our members in regional areas. We look forward to a lively discussion on how we might do this.

RRVV

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018

Please put the following meeting in your diary:

When: Monday 8 October 2018

Time: Registration 10:30 for a 11:00 start

Where: Victoria University Convention Centre Level 12, 300 Flinders Street, Melbourne (Exit Flinders Street Station from the Elizabeth Street end. The venue is on the north side of Flinders Street 75 metres west of Elizabeth Street)

Agenda: Please see the box to the right

Catering: Light lunch

RSVP: Phone 9015 8402 or email admin@rrvv.org.au and, if you have any special dietary requirements, (e.g. gluten-free or vegetarian), please advise us.

This year our guest speakers are Hannah Dodd, Solicitor and Katherine Temple, Senior Policy Advisor of the Consumer Action Law Centre. They will explain how Australian Consumer Law applies to retirement villages and protects residents.

ANNUAL MEETING 2018

Agenda

1. Open and welcome
2. Present and apologies
3. Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting 16th October 2017
4. Presentation of the annual report
5. Presentation of Treasurers report
6. Approval of Association's annual financial statements
7. 2018 - 2019 Budget
8. Approve Membership fees for the 2019 - 2020 financial year
9. Election of office bearers
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
10. Election of up to 5 general committee members
11. Guest speakers
12. Close of meeting

There are four motions listed on the agenda:

1. Approval of the Associations Annual Financial Statements (see the back page of this newsletter)
2. Approve membership fees for the 2019 - 2020 financial year:

RRVV proposes to increase ordinary annual membership fees as follows:

- Single members - from \$10 to \$12
- Couples and other twosomes – from \$15 to \$18

Lifetime membership and whole - of - village membership fees will remain unchanged.

RRVV has not had to increase fees for ten years. RRVV believes it is necessary to increase fees now because:

- a. RRVV has not had an office assistant for almost two years. We have saved money but struggled to keep on top of various administrative tasks.
- b. The 2018-2019 budget includes:
 - provision for an office assistant;
 - increased expenditure on information technology in preparation for a campaign to increase membership;
 - increased expenditure on legal advice necessary to handle more complex matters that members are raising and to prepare for the coming review of the Retirement Villages Act.

As a result, we are forecasting a small loss for the year.

We are expecting that we will again have to increase expenditure on information technology and legal advice next financial year and possibly budget to pay the expenses of regional RLOs. Moreover, we plan to conduct further policy-oriented research in 2019-2020 that will draw heavily on our reserves.

The RRVV committee recommends you vote for the motion to increase fees.

3. Election of office bearers

Please see the nomination form inserted in this newsletter. RRVV will publish a list of nominations received by 30 September on website www.rvv.org.au.

4. Election of committee members

Please see the nomination form inserted in this newsletter. RRVV will publish a list of nominations received by 30 September.

If you cannot attend the meeting you may appoint a member (including the Chair of the meeting) to vote as your proxy. Please see the proxy form inserted in this newsletter.

After lunch, RRVV will hold an RLO meeting. RRVV encourages members attending the AGM who are not RLO's to sit in on what is usually a very informative meeting.

THE RRVV COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU

The term of all RRVV committee positions ends at the end of each Annual General Meeting. Serving committee members are eligible to stand for re-election.

The committee has been under strength for almost two years. We need more committee members if we are to maintain and expand our services to RRVV members and strengthen our influence with government and retirement village operators.

The role of committee members extends well beyond the committee room. Each of us has a job.

The rules of the Association require four office holders:

1. President (currently Lawrie Robertson)
2. Vice President (currently Peter Saalmans)
3. Secretary (currently vacant)
4. Treasurer (currently Graeme Seymour)

The rules also provide for up to 5 ordinary committee members. The jobs available to ordinary members include village liaison, administration, membership, website, IT, newsletter and more. Yes, there are more jobs than committee members.

The committee performs much of its work online and via email, so computer skills are very important. The committee meets for up to three hours on the second Tuesday of each month at RRVV's registered office in Caulfield. Usually, we go out to lunch after the meeting. Access to the office by public transport is good.

The committee's work is highly rewarding. If you believe in the cause and feel you can contribute, please nominate today. If you know someone who is right for RRVV, please nominate that person.

For those of you who are not sure about nominating, we offer the opportunity to sit in on our meetings and monitor our internal communications for a period of three months. At the end of this period, if you are interested in joining, the committee will try to work something mutually satisfactory out with you. Of course, it all depends on whether we continue to have vacancies.



Residents of Retirement Villages Victoria Inc

ABN 20 341 655 161

INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

For the year ended 30 June 2018

	2018 \$	2017 \$
INCOME		
Donations	1,433	1,714
Membership fees	58,694	50,347
Interest received	2,968	3,931
	<u>63,095</u>	<u>55,992</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Administration Expenses	7,264	14,815
Committee Expenses	2,120	3,511
Forums & Presentations	5,131	4,972
Newsletter Costs	15,607	14,733
Rents	5,977	1,140
Website & Internet Costs	1,011	716
	<u>37,110</u>	<u>39,887</u>
SURPLUS FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE INCOME TAX	<u>25,985</u>	<u>16,104</u>
Retained surplus at the beginning of the financial year	84,985	68,881
TOTAL AVAILABLE FOR APPROPRIATION	<u>110,970</u>	<u>84,985</u>

STATEMENT of ASSETS & LIABILITIES

As at 30 June 2018

	2018 \$	2017 \$
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Bank accounts	13,049	5,919
Term deposits	169,308	154,000
Prepayments	567	440
Office Bond Deposit	500	500
	<u>183,424</u>	<u>160,859</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>183,424</u>	<u>160,859</u>
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Trade creditors	754	-
Sundry creditors	1,100	1,300
Deferred Income	40,600	44,574
	<u>42,454</u>	<u>45,874</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>42,454</u>	<u>45,874</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>140,970</u>	<u>114,985</u>
EQUITY		
Accumulated surplus	110,970	84,985
Legal Support Reserve	30,000	30,000
TOTAL EQUITY	<u>140,970</u>	<u>114,985</u>