



President's Report to 2021 Annual General Meeting

This meeting's purpose is to report to you what RRVV and your committee achieved during the 2020-2021 financial year and on developments since the end of the financial year. At the end of this meeting, Laurine Georges, our returning officer, will conduct the election of office bearers and general committee members for the coming committee year

RRVV's main activities are ensuring you are aware of your rights as residents and customers and helping you solve the problems that arise from living in a retirement village. We also promote retirement village living and advocate for reform of operator practices and the Retirement Villages Act.

Requests for information and help were lower throughout the year than in previous years. During the stay-at-home periods, traditional queries about maintenance, village finances, management, residents' committees and help with complaints dropped significantly. Surprisingly, COVID enquiries were also lower. There was, however, an increase in requests for aid with serious complaints. For example, four callers asked for help dealing with their operator who had threatened them with eviction for breaching their contract's 'no nuisance' clause. To protect the parties' confidentiality, I won't comment on individual cases, only three themes:

First, RRVV formed the impression that the operators had no intention to evict. Instead, they were trying to silence critics. We view this as bullying.

Second, operators were reluctant to give the accused information they were relying on and its source. We believe an accused has the fundamental right to know their accusers' names, details of the accusations, and the evidence against them when facing such a serious allegation. We argue that without this information, a complaint is ineffective.

Third, the operators were reluctant to conduct a hearing at which the accused could present a defence.

RRVV has made representations on these points to the team reviewing the Retirement Villages Act.

We could not make as many formal village visits as in pre-COVID years. We did manage to fit in five traditional visits during breaks between periods of restriction and several small group meetings when the rules allowed.



The stay-at-home rules prevented us from working from our Caulfield office for the greater part of the year. During lock-down periods, we mostly managed our work effectively from home. Our response time to queries did, however, suffer. For this, we apologise.

At our last AGM, delayed to January 2021, the Minister for Consumer Affairs said she expected Parliament to soon pass the 2019 amendments to the Owners Corporations Act. After a long and storied journey through the Victorian Parliament, the Governor, in February 2021, gave Royal Assent to the *Owners Corporations and Other Acts Amendment Act 2021*. RRVV initiated most of the amendments of direct relevance to retirement villages.

The amendments will come into effect on the 1st of December 2021 and give residents in villages with an owners corporation the right to have a residents' committee in addition to an owners corporation committee. Owners corporation's committees will have a maximum of seven members (down from 12) unless residents by ordinary resolution at a general meeting approve a higher number. Owners corporation committees will no longer have the powers of a residents' committee.

From the 1st of December 2021, strata-titled villages will make owners corporation rules by special resolution under the Retirement Villages Act. This removes one of the conflicts between the two Acts that regulate strata-titled villages. Unfortunately, the amendments do not put freeholders and leaseholders on an equal decision-making footing.

Important as supporting individual residents and their villages is, the RRVV Committee also works behind the scenes lobbying both governments and retirement village operators. RRVV stayed connected with various State politicians interested in retirement living reform throughout the year, irrespective of their party affiliations. We continued to make representations to the Department of Justice and Community Safety on the Review of the Retirement Villages Act. As part of this, we filed a significant submission on the 14th of May, 2021. You can access a copy on our website. We also continued to press our case with Consumer Affairs Victoria and other government departments on various matters relevant to retirement living.

RRVV maintained contact with the Retirement Living Council and a cross-section of operators throughout the period. During the pandemic, we and representatives from the residents' associations from the other mainland states met regularly with representatives from the Retirement Living Council using Zoom. These meetings are now a permanent fixture in the parties' calendars. The sessions help us influence Retirement Living Council policies and practices.



Our financial year ended on the 30th of June 2021, but the hectic pace did not slow. We reopened our Caulfield office under our new office administrator, Karin Veiser. Our response time to queries shortened at once. Unfortunately, COVID again intruded.

We have met regularly with the Victorian committee of the Retirement Living Council responsible for their contributions to the review of the Retirement Villages Act to reconcile our differences. We are making progress.

I thank my overstretched fellow committee members Neal Robertson, Charles Adams, Kaye Graham, Graeme Seymour, and Jo Watkins for their valuable contributions. I also thank Rosemary McIndoe and Brian Hedger, who served with us early in the financial year but later resigned.

We thank the small army of Resident Liaison Officers who represent RRVV in their villages and without whom we could not function. Likewise, we thank the volunteers who critically review our submissions, newsletter articles and emerging ideas.

To all of you who have been lobbying State politicians, I thank you. Please keep up your magnificent work. We are going to need friends in Parliament over the coming year.

Margaret Pridham continued her outstanding work on our processes and IT systems throughout the period. We thank her. We thank Karin Veiser for her administrative support. She has only been with us for a short while and already is indispensable.

Julie King has tirelessly supported RRVV at the Department of Justice and Community Safety's Stakeholder Reference Group meetings. She has also generously contributed her public policy and legal skills. We thank her.

I thank you for your attention and continued support.