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16 September 2016

Residential Tenancy Act Review
Fairer Safer Housing
Consumer Affairs Victoria
GPO Box 123
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

By email: yoursay@fairersaferhousing.vic.gov.au

Dear Fairer Safer Housing,

The Residential Tenancies (Caravan Parks and Movable Dwellings Registration and Standards) Regulations 2010 are made under the Residential Tenancies Act. I have concerns regarding the exemption from energy efficiency rating requirements for movable dwellings that is allowed under the regulations. The review of the act presents an opportunity for these concerns to be considered and acted upon for the safety of vulnerable aged members of the community.

The application of the Residential Tenancies (Caravan Parks and Movable Dwellings Registration and Standards) Regulations 2010 is currently enabling the creation of substandard housing for vulnerable aged members of the community. One such development is currently being established in Cardinia Shire that has raised significant concern.

The development in Officer is made up of 150 elaborate dwellings that are not required to have consideration for many energy rating requirements such as solar water heating, floor insulation, orientation and glazing quality. Some of the dwellings are over 100 square metres in size, contain up to 3 bedrooms and are constructed at the same time as attached verandas and garages.

Although these dwellings are manufactured in location and are not intended to be moved they have been engineered to separate into pieces to allow transportation. Due to this design they can be classified as movable dwellings and are therefore exempt from building permits and energy ratings under the current regulations.

The dwellings being developed in Officer are targeted at those over 55. With the impacts of climate change increasing, the elderly are at the greatest risk of illness and death due to extreme temperatures. The reduced protection these dwellings provide from extreme temperatures represents a significant risk to health.

Poor thermal comfort conditions in these dwellings are exacerbated by the scale of concrete and the layout of the developments. Low income aged members in the community are often reluctant to use air conditioning and heating for their comfort due to concerns regarding energy costs. These dwellings enhance this situation due to the higher energy costs they require to achieve comfortable thermal conditions. Consumers would often assume that the dwellings comply with the Building Regulations and their marketing does not provide details regarding their failure to achieve the energy rating requirements of standard dwellings.

Regulations for these types of developments in South Australia have much higher energy standards. A development similar to that which is occurring in Officer would require standard 6 star energy ratings were it being constructed in Adelaide's urban fringe.

Requiring 6 star energy ratings for new unregistered movable dwellings will ensure that the health of vulnerable members of the community is not placed at risk by substandard developments in the future. Making these modifications only for unregistered movable dwellings will ensure that they do not impact on road registered caravans and camper trailers commonly used for holiday purposes.

I request that changes to require 6 star energy ratings for new unregistered movable dwellings are made and I look forward to hearing of progress in relation to this matter. I anticipate this change can be made as part of the current Residential Tenancy Act review.

Yours faithfully



Derek Madden
Acting Chief Executive Officer